NOVEMBER 1997

THE UNESCO COURIER

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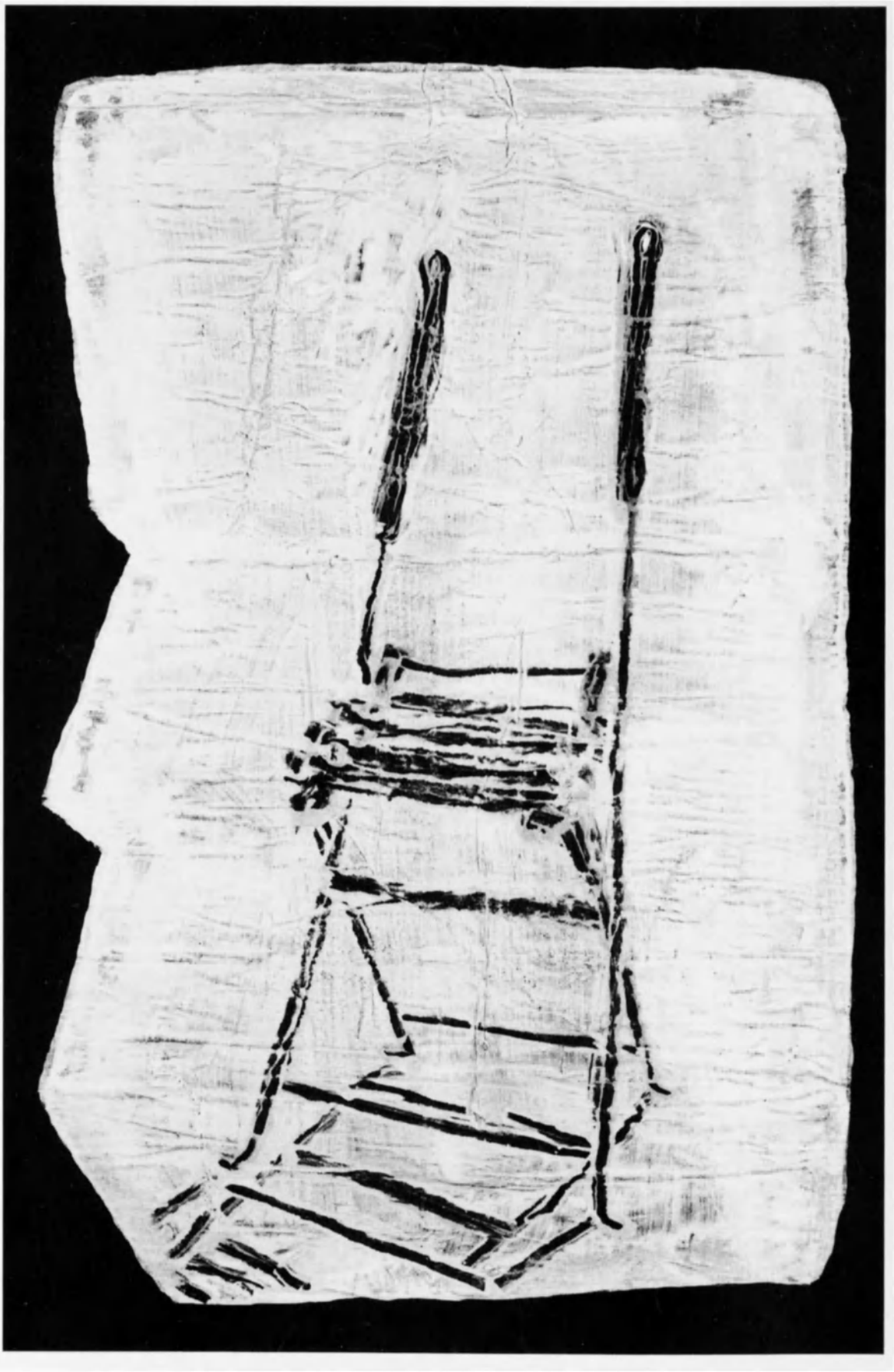

We invite readers to send us photographs to be considered for publication in this feature. Your photo should show a painting, a sculpture, piece of architecture or any other subject which seems to be an example of cultural cross-fertilization. Alternatively, you could send us pictures of two works from different cultural backgrounds in which you see some striking connection or resemblance. Please add a short caption to all photographs.

THE CHAIR

1994, acrylic on newspaper (80 x 56 cm) by Michel Molins

This chair belongs to the oldest member of a pygmy group whose life the artist shared during a month spent in Africa. It symbolizes the gradual sedentarization "directly or indirectly" imposed on the world's nomadic peoples. The painter sees this widespread sedentarization as a form of intolerance and a refusal by dominant societies to accept ways of life different from their own.

© Michel Molins, Toulouse

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Andrée Chedid
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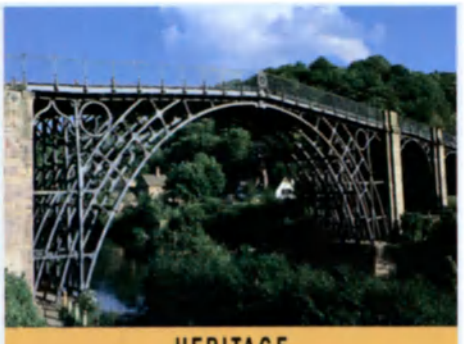

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Time Rocker, directed by American Bob Wilson.
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month by month

by Bahgat Elnadi and Adel Rifaat

The award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to the Italian playwright Dario Fo, a few weeks ago, was a reminder both that the theatre is a major art and that it is in good shape. In spite of strong competition from the cinema and to an even greater extent from television, theatre still attracts vast audiences the world over.

What makes the theatre irreplaceable is the direct physical link it establishes between what happens onstage and the audience. This explains why each performance in the theatre is unique. However many times a film or a video is shown its content never varies; a theatrical performance is never the same twice running. The emotions it arouses are stimulated by a mysterious process of alchemy, which begins when the actors encounter an audience that is always different, and which dies out when the curtain falls. Theatre is designed to serve this mystery, to enable it to happen again and again.

This plasticity which is the touchstone of theatre may be one of the reasons why theatre has survived for so many centuries and found a place in so many cultures; why it has adapted to all periods and has sometimes foreshadowed them and even announced their birth.

Since the invention of classical theatre by the Greeks, great dramatists such as Shakespeare, Beaumarchais, Goethe and Ibsen have given wide currency to this concept of theatre in the West. But what of theatre elsewhere? This issue looks at what happened in Japan and India, in Africa and the Arab world, and to some extent in Latin America and Russia, after theatre rooted in traditional society was confronted with "the shock of the new"—modern European theatre which has tended to focus on what might be called intimate tragedy rather than the destiny of communities, highlighting the individual personality rather than the archetype. Far from collapsing, however, theatre in these countries has taken on a new lease of life in the twentieth century.

It is almost as if theatre-lovers everywhere had spontaneously agreed that the new should not be allowed to sign the death warrant of the old—in this case theatre itself—but should instead seek channels whereby traditional inspiration could irrigate modern forms of expression, whereby the theatre, by transforming itself, would continue to celebrate life.

The ninth International Festival of Experimental Theatre, held in Cairo from 1 to 11 September 1997, showed brilliantly how attempts are being made on all continents to present many of the great questions of the contemporary world through the prism of theatre.

In other words, where there's life there's theatre. ■

In an age of spreading computer technology and cultural intermingling, the world's many forms of theatre have reached a crucial stage

Theatre for tomorrow

BY RICHARD SCHECHNER

"Where is the theatre going?" The question is often asked, but perhaps it would be more accurate to ask it in the plural rather than the singular, for it is clear that there are many different kinds of theatre and that they are not moving in lock-step.

There is the theatre of artists, modeled on Western-style plays made mostly of words, written by playwrights and acted for the most part in a naturalistic style.

***The Dragons' Trilogy*, directed by the Canadian Robert Lepage, a leading exponent of the "forward-looking avant-garde".**

© Bernand, Paris

There is the theatre of highly codified gestures, costumes and make-up, combining the spoken word with sung dialogue and songs, such as Japanese Kabuki.

There is theatre that could also be called dance or opera because of its total integration of movement, gesture, song and narrative—such as Chinese *jingju* or Indian *Kathakali*.

There is the theatre of ritual performances addressing, honouring or entertaining the gods—as practised in many cultures around the world.

There is the theatre of popular festivity and ritual where people build and wear masks and full-body costumes, such as Yoruban *gelede*, Hopi *kachina*, or Trinidadian carnival. There is the theatre of religious narrative which takes many days to enact, such as Indian *Ramlila*, Yaqui *Waehma*, or the Passion play performed once every ten years at Oberammergau in Germany.

There is so-called "mainstream" theatre—Broadway, the West End and Boulevard Theatre.

There is also avant-garde or experimental theatre.

The life and death of the avant-garde

Once upon a time avant-garde or experimental theatre was "in advance of" what was following. But it has been at least twenty-five years since that was so. Avant-garde theatre is no longer in advance of anything, and most of the persons working in it do not risk failure in order to explore new boundaries of performance knowledge or practice. In fact, there are strong arguments for saying that all today's theatre is "official", paid for by governments, foundations, or other mainstream funds—or desiring to be paid for by them. Of course, many works are still labeled "avant-garde", but the term does not refer to a single style or tendency, but to several.

✔ **The current avant-garde** consists of whatever or whoever critics, audiences and artists identify as belonging to the avant-garde. Calling

P. Perrin © Sygma, Paris

***A Chorus Line*, directed and choreographed by Michael Bennett with music by Marvin Hamlisch. It was first produced on Broadway in 1975.**

a theatre artist "avant-garde" is sometimes more a way of praising the artist than describing the work.

✔ **The historical avant-garde.** This is the line of development which began with naturalism in Europe in the 1880s and extended through many successive waves of experimentation: symbolism, futurism, Dada, surrealism, Happenings, environmental theatre, performance art, and so on. Each of these claimed hegemony over all its predecessors; each was destined to be absorbed into the mainstream in one way or another. Works that were hissed off the stage by one generation were honoured by the next.

This historical avant-garde ended in the 1970s. No more waves of newness came crashing onto the shore. With the emergence of postmodernism, recycling came to the fore. The end of the historical avant-garde probably coincided with a certain perception of the finality of scientific knowledge, as new developments in science came to be technical innovations and "improvements" rather than shifts in fundamental paradigms. A definite mode of stability reminiscent of the European Middle Ages came to be felt. Perhaps if newness is to become important again it will originate outside the Euro-American cultural sphere. But since the end of the Cold War and the advent of "globalization", is anywhere really outside the Euro-American cultural sphere?

✔ **The forward-looking avant-garde** enacts an amazing and sometimes apocalyptic future. It celebrates the newest technology and is currently dominated by interactive telecommunications and CD-ROMS, the Internet, virtual realities, and multimedia.

✔ **The tradition-seeking avant-garde,** on the other hand, eschews high tech and looks instead towards "ancient knowledge," "rituals," and "traditional performances" especially in non-Western cultures. Here the ideas and researches of the Polish director and teacher of acting Jerzy Grotowski are dominant. Grotowski has said that his goal is "To re-evoke a very ancient form of art where ritual and artistic creation were seamless. Where poetry was song, song was incantation, movement was dance. One might say—but it is only a metaphor—that we are trying to go back and discover what was before the Tower of Babel. First to discover differences, and then to discover what was before the differences.... We can hope to discover a very old form of art, art as *a way of knowledge*."

✔ **The intercultural avant-garde** has two aspects. One is positive, seeking and synthesizing "universals" and connections between cultures. The other is ironic and probing, seeking out disjunctures and miscommunications "at the borders." The work of the Danish director Eugenio Barba and his International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA) is an example of the first aspect (see the *UNESCO Courier*, January 1996); the practice and theories of the performance artist Guillermo Gomez-Pena are an example of the second.

At ISTA and in his writings, Barba attempts to show how "pre-expressive" positions, movements and gestures are at the root of all effective artistic performing. For Barba, these are most clearly seen in Asian dance-theatres such as *Kathakali* and *Odissi* in India, *buto* in Japan, *jingju*, and *kunchu* in China. Gomez-Pena emphasizes the contradictions of living and working in more than one culture simultaneously. While Barba wants to find connections, Gomez-Pena and others like him explore the ways in which cultures collide and fail to communicate, with their attendant fractures, difficulties, ideological contradictions and crumbling national myths. Barba tends to work with traditional performers; Gomez-Pena with both traditional and post-modern artists.

The principal goal of the historical avant-garde was to expose, ridicule, and destabilize official art and official culture. The principal goals of the other four kinds of avant-garde are too various to summarize, but revolution and rebellion are not today very important themes. Nor is there an attempt to present "the shock of the new". The newest work in today's avant-garde is highly technological—and these technologies are immensely popular and widespread, global even. They are innovative but not shocking; they tend to integrate rather than divide; and they cost a lot of money, especially during the development stage, and so there has to be a deep alliance with the social forces that have money.

What next?

Once it was felt that theatre would disappear in the face of various other forms of dramatic entertainment and arts, especially movies and video. But the emergence of computer technology is more likely to lead to a collapse of the differences between the various media arts. The use of the information chip instead of strips of celluloid or magnetic tape will mean an increasingly easy-to-use flow back and forth of images and actions from computer to film to video—and also between the so-called live and the so-called mediated.

I use the term "so-called" because interactivity will allow for the immediate intervention of "viewers" or "audiences" who will become "users" or co-creators. And although fixed-text media—movies and television—will be ubiquitous, interactive exchanges on the personal as well as the artistic level will increase exponentially.

The emergence of chip technology and performance does not sound the death knell of "live theatre". It means only that the various avant-gardes will bifurcate even more. If today there are five avant-gardes, in twenty-five years there may be ten or more.

Collectively, there will be a lot of live performance, but each genre will have relatively few scattered clients, brought together first by means of the Internet and secondly by local and regional "festivals" or other occasions that gather into one spot for a limited time all those interested in a certain kind of performance.

Rehearsing an Afro-Brazilian dance in Salvador (Brazil).

© John Maier, Still Pictures London

Culture will no longer be defined as localized in place, but as localized in taste and practice. People will be able to belong to a "drama culture" or a "performance art culture" wherever they happen to live.

This new definition of "local" will have an effect on traditional performance genres. At present, such forms as *Kathakali* or Nô, *gelede*, samba or *wayang kulit* have been tied to a particular place, particular social practices, and particular practitioners. But increasingly, at least some of these forms are opening to practitioners who might not be "born to them," and are frequently domiciled outside their place of origin or primary practice.

Global tourism and traditional arts

Global tourism exerts an extremely strong pressure. Governments and corporations—often indistinguishable from each other—are replacing traditional patrons. Already many traditional arts have been commercialized, globalized and "smoothed out" to satisfy the tastes of tourists and "art lovers". Only those societies rich enough to establish categories comparable to Japan's "living national treasures" will be able to preserve their traditional arts as such. And even when they are preserved in this way, the traditional arts tend to exist in venues that are, like museums or game parks, strictly fenced off from the impact of ongoing life. Many traditional arts will cease to exist. No effective remedy has been found to stop this cultural extinction, which is in any case not entirely bad. Times and circumstances change; not everything that was can be preserved indefinitely. Sometimes the urge to preserve is a mask hiding fear of change.

Nor ought we to underestimate people's inventiveness and creativity, especially the power of popular culture. As advanced economies preserve some traditional arts in their traditional forms, and other less protected arts vanish, a new category of continuous creation of tradition through fusion and hybridity is emerging. Throughout Latin America, for example, performances fusing African, European, and Native American religions are thriving. Other parts of the world are experiencing a similar surge of creativity.

Over the past several centuries immigration and displacement have created the greatest movement among the world's peoples ever experienced. From assailed or displaced fragments of cultural practices, new vigorous performances have arisen. And soon enough, formerly "artificial" or "synthetic" practices are transformed into new wholes. We live in a period where older traditional arts exist side by side with new traditional arts, the fruit of both consciously "invented traditions" and less thought-out but very robust hybrids.

'Ordinary theatre'—the string quartet of the next century

And what about "ordinary theatre" (in Euro-American terms), the enactment of dramas written by playwrights and performed by actors? Of course, this kind of theatre is not "universal" and "omnipresent". It is a specific cultural occurrence and as such it could go extinct. But I don't think it will. I believe that this kind of theatre will become the string quartet of the twenty-first century. By that I mean that it will have a small devoted audience, but it will not be important in the way it was, say, at the end of the nineteenth century ▶

when a new drama by Ibsen could shake up an entire continent. The important debates about public culture will be conducted outside theatres—on TV, over the Internet, in new rituals convened and enacted electronically, or via mass movements assembled in the streets.

Live performance

But this is not the whole story. The utopian electronic global village may turn out to be as non-existent as all previous utopias. The media and the Internet are increasingly omnipresent but they do not satisfy certain basic needs that are met by live performance. In fact, live theatre will flourish to some degree *because* of the rapid development of media and instant information transmission. Note that I say "information"—and perhaps ought to say "data"—and do not use the more complex term "communication". The media provide more information than communication, while live performance often offers more communication than information.

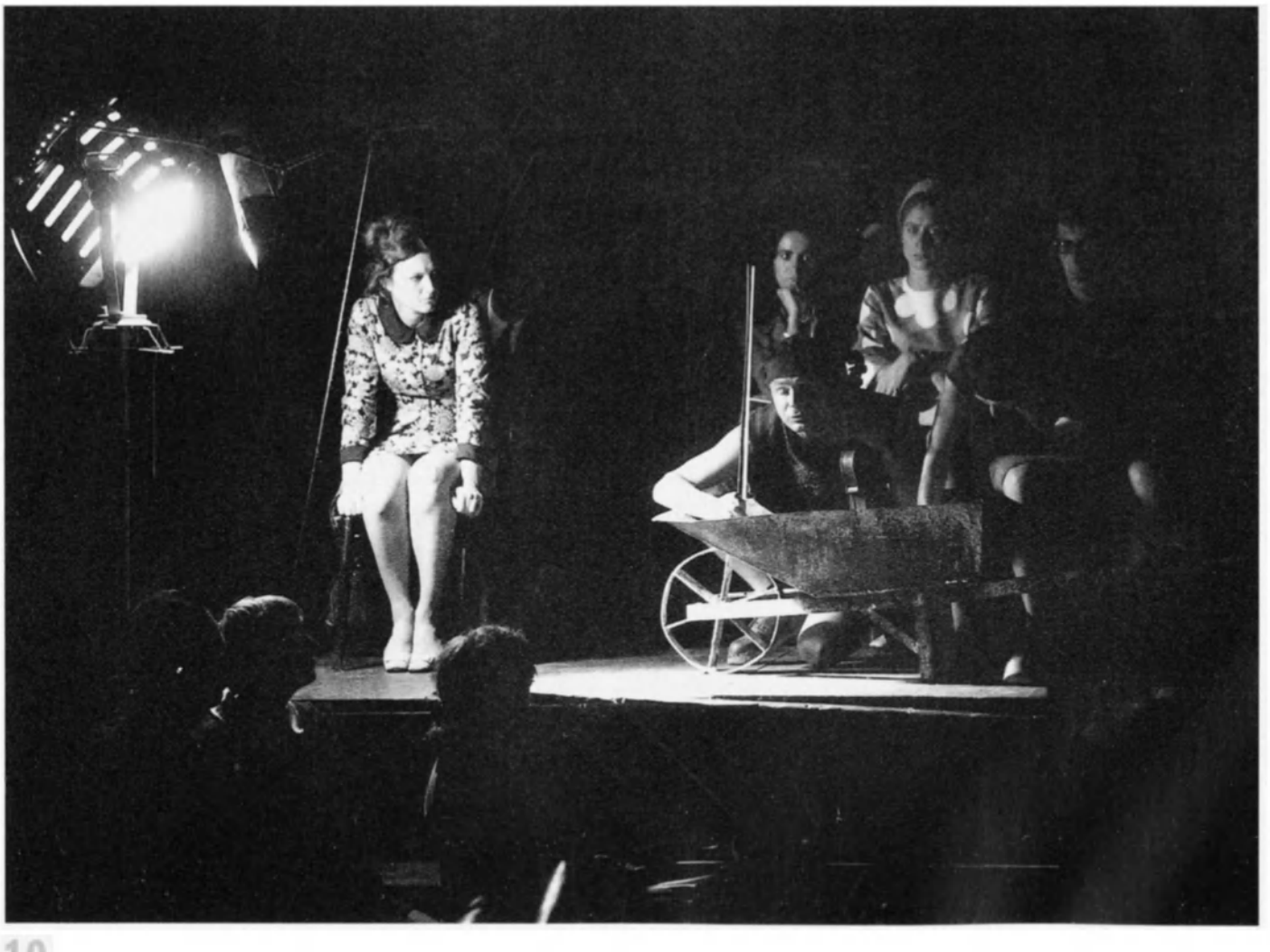
Live performance can be sub-divided into non-theatre and theatre performances. The former include performance in everyday life, religious services, sports, and popular entertainments such as rock-music concerts and theme parks. There are three kinds of live theatre: Broadway, boulevard, and other large-scale commercial enterprises; not-for-profit, subsidized mainstream theatres such as the Stadtheaters in Germany or the regional theatres in the U.S.A.; experimental theatre and performance art.

Commercial theatre is self-supporting because it effectively exploits crossovers between media and live performance. Shows and stars exist both live and on tape, CDs, and film. In this sense, the pop entertainment industry is the most advanced performance genre economically and technically.

The Stadtheater system is the way in which the middle class tells itself that it is "cultured" and "responsible". Its repertory is based on "classics" but includes some new works and the safer experimental artists who "graduate" to official status.

Experimental theatre and performance art, which I regard as the "contemporary avant-garde", are harder to pin down. Some performance artists become fairly big stars and occasionally a movie star also continues to work in

The Polish director Jerzy Grotowski has described his goal as an attempt to "discover a very old form of art, art as a way of knowledge". Below, a scene from Grotowski's production of *Akropolis*, based on a 1904 play by Stanislaw Wyspianski.



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© Charles Lenars, Paris

The god of evil in a 1980 Beijing Opera production of *The Monkey King Wreaks Havoc in Heaven.*

experimental theatre. But basically, experimental theatre and performance art take place in small venues for tiny audiences.

Yet they perform a very important function. Live performance of this type continues to be "dangerous". By dangerous I do not mean that the performers wound themselves onstage but that they work in front of audiences while making and recovering from mistakes and unforeseen circumstances. Live performance is also able to explore risky or taboo subjects, unlike large-scale media such as film and video which involve so much money that often the financial backers do not want to take chances. Finally, live performances before/with small audiences allow for the experience of close contact physically, emotionally and conceptually between actors and spectators. This experience of shared presence is irreplaceable.

Will there be money for this kind of theatre? Surely not enough. At one time, experimental performance got no public or official support at all. Maybe under those circumstances the avant-garde was most alive, dangerous, and important, since it owed its existence to no one except the artists and the immediate audiences gave freedom to those involved. Of course, censorship and worse has always been and will continue to be a threat. But the underground seems to find a way.

There is a real need for an unofficial or anti-official theatre. Official theatre—no matter how beautiful—is always just that, "official". And in houses of worship—live theatre's closest sibling—laughter is scarce, especially laughter of the sarcastic, ironic, parodic, and blasphemous kinds. Nor do church, synagogue, mosque or temple encourage bleak tragedy or atheistic scepticism. Official or corporate theatres, newspapers and media, as well as state sponsored religions, all require continuous challenge and critique. Corrective tones of unbelief, mockery, parody, horror and delight are found in experimental theatre and performance art. I hope the next century will see plenty of this kind of theatre. ■

Rules made to be broken

BY JEAN-PIERRE GUINGANÉ

Theatre people only became an accepted part of African society sometime in the 1980s. It was on European stages that most of them, like the Congolese poet Sony Labou Tansi and his Roccado Zulu Theatre, first won recognition and fame. Then, largely as a result of democratization and the spread of education, theatre took root in African soil and endeavoured to become involved in African society. This change can be seen in the flowering and spread of social action theatre, a form of drama which has different names in different countries (it is known as "Useful Theatre" in Mali, and "Forum Theatre" and "Debate Theatre" in Burkina Faso) and is staged in local languages for grassroots audiences in villages and urban working class neighbourhoods. Social action drama attempts to change attitudes about specific questions such as hygiene, customs or relationships with community property (a well, for example).

Signs of this change can also be seen in the increasing number of facilities for production and performance across the continent. Theatres, private cultural centres and festivals reveal a strong determination by African artists to produce theatre tailored for their public. What impact has this had on the sources of inspiration used by creative artists?

During the 1980s, political life was the primary source for African playwrights, who concentrated on describing what they saw as the bankruptcy of African political regimes. Plays like Sony Labou Tansi's *Anthony Sold Me His Destiny* (1986) and *The Street of Flies* (1985), Zadi Zahourou Bernard's *The Secret of the Gods* (1985), Senouvo Agbota Zinsou's *The Singing Turtle* (1985) and my own *The Entranced Savannah* (1990) and *The Madman* (1987) were highly popular.

With the advent of the 1990s politics were replaced by three other main sources of inspiration: traditional dramatization, religious ritual and folk art.

Below, a show staged to alert street children to the threat of Aids. This example of social action theatre was performed in Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo) with support from Médecins Sans Frontières, a humanitarian aid agency.

© Beatrice Petit, Brussels

Traditional drama

Traditional African society is highly codified and the individual is subject to such a wide range of social, professional and religious rules that he or she ends up thinking that only the community counts.

Yet almost everywhere these rules provide for moments of release where the individual is allowed to transgress the social code, often through acting. In Mali, for example, the avowed goal of the *kotéba*, a form of folk theatre organized once a year by young people, was to give the young a chance to criticize their elders. This was the only occasion in the year when they could do this without risk—the young people were in duty bound to have their say about society, while their elders were in duty bound not to hold it against them.

Africa's social action theatre taps a heritage of traditional games designed to help people let off steam

© Marc Enguerand, Paris

Scene from the Congolese playwright Sony Labou Tansi's *Antoine m'a vendu son destin* ("Antoine sold me his destiny"), directed by Daniel Mesguich (France).

Everything said in this form of theatre was above the law.

In Burkina Faso certain Mossi societies held a market at night-time once a year. During the night, all established rules—especially sexual taboos—were consigned to limbo, and a person could go with the person he or she had dreamed about all year long, even the wife or husband of a close relative. When dawn came, however, everything returned to normal.

These two examples are interesting because they can be considered as forms of play, of social dramatization or dedramatization. The protagonists were aware that they were acting because they knew that at a specific moment the rules would change again. The current success of African social action theatre has roots in social games of this kind.

Although this form of theatre was created and tested in Latin America, especially Brazil, by Augusto Boal, it has not simply been lifted from Latin America and transplanted in Africa. African society has changed so much that a tool had to be found to enable ruling classes, whether African or non-African, which are often out of touch with everyday life, to communicate with local communities in order to involve them in development. African social action theatre is far less political in its intentions than Boal's "theatre of the oppressed" and is effective because it knows so much about the mindset of those it wishes to reach.

It is intended for popular, often illiterate audiences which can only be reached by dealing with things that are important to them in their daily lives. Social action theatre draws inspiration therefore from community life in its raw state. The skill of the organizers lies in getting the audience to identify with the characters before going on to achieve critical detachment from its own behaviour. They do this via the process whereby traditional societies periodically call themselves into question by turning social rules upside down as an encouragement to self-criticism.

From a formal point of view, social action ▸

A performance of Guinean playwright Williams Sassine's *Légende d'une vérité* ("Legend of a Truth") directed by Fasou Siba (Guinea).

© Patrick Fabre/Festival des francophonies, Limoges (France)

theatre achieves very close contact with its audience by adopting the acting techniques of traditional artists such as the West African griot. The goal of each performance is to create an atmosphere that will encourage communication between the different groups in the audience. The audience and the audience alone will make the decision whether or not to change its behaviour.

Religious ritual

We have also seen a flowering of religious sects and a strengthening of mysticism in traditional religions—Animism, Christianity and Islam. As a mirror to life, the theatre could not afford to ignore this movement.

Firstly we are seeing a return to traditional ritual. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, so-called ritual theatre has been one of the main avenues of experimentation in theatre, opened up by studies carried out by Jacques Scherer and Werewere Liking on the ritual and staging techniques of the Basa people of Cameroon. Since then, the presence of ritual in the theatre has become commonplace. In 1985 Sony Labou Tansi was already noting in the introduction to *The Street of Flies* that "This play is in the tradition of a theatre that is as old as the Kongo world, the Kingizila or theatre of healing." Zadi Zahourou Bernard has based his entire theatre aesthetic on a ritual of the Bete people of Côte d'Ivoire from which his troupe, Didiga, takes its name.

But these borrowings are not limited to traditional rituals; theatre has also drawn inspiration from imported religions. *Concert Party*, for example, a form of popular theatre staged in Togo and Ghana, owes its form to Christian church rituals in those countries.

Nowadays most big African theatre shows have their share of "rituality" either in the setting and the acting or in the words themselves. Ritual seems to be necessary to win over the

Jean-Pierre Guingané's *Le baobab merveilleux* ("The Wonderful Baobab Tree") staged by the Théâtre de la fraternité of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso).

© Théâtre de la fraternité, Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso)

© Patrick Fabre/Festival des francophonies, Limoges (France)

Members of Côte d'Ivoire's Ymako Teatri Company in a performance of *La légende de Kaidara* ("The Legend of Kaidara") directed by Claude Gnakouri and Luis Marquès. The play is based on a work by the Malian writer Amadou Hampaté Bâ.

audience. Perhaps that accounts for the success of Mwambayi Kalengayi's (of the former Zaire) production of *La passion selon Pier Paolo Pasolini* ("The Passion According to Pier Paolo Pasolini"), a play that depicts with fascinating realism the lives of the many preachers who haunt African cities without anyone knowing whether they are politicians or men of religion.

In a different way, the costumes, make-up and plot of Fasou Siba's Guinea National Theatre production of Williams Sassine's *Légende d'une vérité* ("Legend of a Truth") bear a strange resemblance to a ceremony of exorcism in a village.

Traditional arts

At present, however, playwrights draw most of their inspiration from folk tales.

Of a total of some twenty plays staged in African theatres in 1996 and 1997, more than half were based on folk tales. Some plays such as Akonio Dolo's *Zinimo . . . Zinimo Zi*, Souleymane Koly's *La colère de la brousse* ("The Anger of the Bush") and Habib Dembélé's *Fidélité cravachée* ("Horsewhipped Loyalty"), stay very close to classic tales although they attach more importance to the use of space and movement. They contain two characteristic features of folk tales—elements of fantasy combined with an outlook on the world that always makes a moral point. The work of the African sage Amadou Hampaté Bâ is also beginning to be adapted to the stage.

Through use of folk sources—community life, folk plays, religious ritual and folk tales—African theatre has confirmed its goal of addressing itself above all to the audience it wants to reach, an African audience. And that is a good thing, for it is by translating the deepest aspirations of this audience that African theatre will earn credibility and some day have a chance of attracting wider audiences. ■

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Togo's Danai Puppet Theatre (Togo), whose repertory is largely taken from folk tales.

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An art in search of its roots

BY ROMAIN MAITRA

***Raslila*, below, is a devotional and ritual theatre form which originated in northern India.**

© J.-M. Steinlein, Maison des cultures du monde, Paris

Indian folk theatre is a composite art with a composite set of skills practised by artists who stage a total performance through the creation of verbal, spatial and visual patterns. Folk theatre forms such as *Jatra* from Bengal, *Tamasha* from Maharashtra, *Nautanki* from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Punjab, *Bhavai* from Gujarat, *Yakshagana* from Karnataka and *Therukuttu* from Tamil Nadu feature a wide range of make-up, song, dance, mime, improvised repartee, slapstick or stylized acting, and even acrobatics.

These folk theatres give a glimpse of styles of speech, music, dance, dress, behaviour, humour, legend, proverb and wit in their respective regions. The actors, who are often very talented performers, speak directly to the

Forms of folk drama rooted in the villages could give new impetus to modern Indian theatre

audience—audience participation is the hallmark of Indian folk theatre—and often improvise. They are apt to mix up several moods and disciplines, from time to time bursting into song and dancing with gusto when the chorus sings their dialogue. The result is a form of drama which springs from an exhilarating freedom of expression and provides the villagers with a complete emotional experience in an environment in which ideas can be effortlessly communicated.

Folk forms have their own stage conventions and production styles. The scenography is nonrealistic and the stage is usually a bare space manipulated by the actors through the use of stylized and symbolic make-up and by codified gait, choreographic acting, and symbolic hand gestures. Change of location is denoted by movement and by word of mouth rather than by change of set and decor.

Folk theatre has inherited many of the classical conventions of Sanskrit theatre. The classical *Sutradhar* or narrator is used in several vernacular theatres, and the classical *Vidushak* or buffoon appears under different names in different regions as *Konangi*, *Komali*, or *Joothan Mian*. Other stock characters are found in different regions.

While ageless in pattern these performances are refreshingly novel in their appeal. Cosmic or symbolic battles between the forces of good and evil, mythological stories and legendary romantic tales are sprinkled with commentary on current social or political conditions. One reason for the survival of folk plays, in fact, has been their capacity to gradually adapt old themes to changing ways of life and satirize the latest local happenings. The exaggeration, malapropism and ready wit in the following piece of dialogue from *Naqal* (from Punjab), taken from Balwant Gargi's *Folk Theatre of India* (1966), is typical. ▶

Below and opposite page above, an episode from the *Mahabharata*, the great Indian epic, directed by Raton Thiyam.

© Bernard Paris

Inspector: How did you know that a thief had burgled?

Wife: Pearly one, I heard the haystack barking and saw it running toward the dog.

Inspector: What did you do then?

Wife: Great Sire, I jumped out of my bed. Immediately I rolled my skirt and put on the bed around my waist.

Inspector: Then what happened?

Wife: May God bless you with a dozen children! Then I saw the courtyard rushing past the thief.

Cobbler (*peeping from behind*): Sir, she is trembling with fear. If you permit m-m-m . . . if you per-

Inspector: Bark!

Cobbler: May the plume of your turban....

Inspector: Be brief ! Tell me what have you lost?

Cobbler: Sir, I have lost nine yards of my cow, and the black-hoofed turban is. . . .

With the disintegration of the traditional culture and the growing impact of industrial society, however, folk theatre is gradually losing its artistic character and vitality. Powerful forces of globalization, accompanied by aggressive images and values of the West, are compounding the ill effects of 200 years of colonization which had already shaken traditional Indian cultures loose from their moorings. Urban influences have a weapon of matchless power—the TV and cinema—whose shadow is falling over village drama.

And yet at the same time, many Indian directors realize that theatre forms borrowed from the West are inadequate to project the social aspirations, ways of life, cultural patterns and problems of the people of India as a whole. Since, like theatre artists all over the world, they are interested in establishing a closer relationship between the theatre and the people, there is every reason why they should make greater use of the living tradition of indigenous theatre.

It is unfortunate that there has not been more mutual exchange and collaboration between the urban and rural traditions in Indian theatre. Some leading theatre groups in Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi are involved in experiments of this kind, but they are relatively few. Ultimately, the outcome of their work will depend on the resilience of the theatre form itself to withstand and coexist with the powerful invasion of commercial cinema and television sitcoms and serials. ■

A scene from *Therukuttu*, folk theatre from Tamil Nadu in southern India.

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The chequered fortunes of Japan's modern drama

© J. M. Steinlein, Maison des cultures du monde, Paris

Shingeki's restless century

BY OHZASA YOSHIO*

***The Watering Place*, above, was written and staged by the Tenkei Gekijo company.**

There is a basic difference between classical Japanese theatre and *Shingeki* or "modern theatre", which emerged in the early twentieth century under the influence of Western theatre. Classical theatre, which is performed exclusively by men, is musical theatre with a strong infusion of dance, unlike *Shingeki*, which is purely verbal, a theatre of dialogue.

The traditional forms of Japanese classical drama, Nô, Kabuki and Bunraku, are quite distinct from each other and each one has its own playhouses. There are Nô theatres (*nôgakudô*) and Kabuki theatres, and Bunraku (a variant of puppet theatre) is only performed on specially designed stages. When Shingeki came along, it created a need for Western-style playhouses in which the curtain divides the stage from the audience. In response to the aesthetics of realism, women began appearing in plays after centuries of banishment from the stage.

In theory neither traditional theatre nor modern theatre, which politically speaking leans to the left, receive state subsidies. National theatres do exist—Tokyo's National Kabuki Theatre (founded in 1969), the National Puppet Theatre of Osaka, the Theatre of Traditional Arts, Tokyo's Nô Theatre and the New National Theatre created in 1997 for ballet and opera—but with the exception of the Osaka Puppet Theatre they do not have permanent companies. There is no national theatre school.

In 1990 however, the state created the Society for the Encouragement of Arts and Letters which defrays part of the costs of theatre, music and dance performances. This was the first official state contribution to the theatre. Support also comes from two long-established theatre companies, Shôshiku, which finances Kabuki performances, and Tôhô, which together with other private companies have funded the construction of numerous theatres.

Shôshiku and Tôhô producers stage separate Shingeki performances by recruiting actors to work with the major stars of theatre, cinema and television. This is what is known as commercial theatre. The avowed aim of these performances, which are held in theatres that can seat from 1,000 to 2,000 people, is to make profit.

The traditional compartmentalization of different types of theatre is not totally watertight. Some Kabuki actors act in new productions in films and on television, even including ▸

* People's names: following Japanese custom, the surname precedes the given name.—*Ed.*

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Left, the two tramps in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in a 1960 Tokyo production by the Buragaku-za (The Company of Letters).

American and British musical comedies. In the last few years musical comedies—mainly adaptations of Western works—have become increasingly popular. A show can attract tens of thousands of people and run for up to a year.

Takarazuka is a celebrated all-female review and musical comedy company whose repertory includes works such as *Oklahoma*, *Me and my Girl* and *Grand Hotel* as well as Japanese works based on popular comic strips like the well-known *Berusayu no bara* ("The Roses of Versailles") which has entertained millions of spectators. This company, which aims largely at a female audience, still has an immense following today.

Born again Shingeki

During Japan's militarist period before the Second World War, Shingeki was repressed, and by the summer of 1945 only one company was left—the Bungaku-za ("The Company of Letters"), which had been founded in 1937. During the democratization process initiated by the American authorities, Shingeki came back to life as popular theatre. Newly founded around directors such as Aoyama Sugisaku* and Senda Koreeya, the Haiyû-za (Actors Theatre) Company in 1946 staged *Kensatsukan*, a Japanese version of Gogol's *Revisor* (*The Inspector General*). After reforming his company, Shînkyôgekidan, which he had been forced to break up, Murayama Tomoyoshi returned to the theatre in the same year with *Kofuku no îe*, a production of Vladimir Fedorov's *The House of Happiness*. Kubo Sakae, one of Shingeki's great playwrights, inaugurated the Tokyo Geijutsu Gekijô (the Tokyo Art Theatre) with actors including Takizawa Osamu, and made a new departure in the same year with Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. A number of leading theatre people joined the communist party (newly recognized as a political party) and, as before the war, made it their duty to spread its message through the theatre.

By 1948 the great figures of pre-war Shingeki had already made their come-back. Some new plays, such as Miyoshi Jurô's *Sono hito o shirazu* ("You don't know this man") and Tanaka Shikao's *Kumo no hatate* ("At the end of the clouds"), depicted post-war life. Others like Kinoshita Junji's *Yûzuru* ("Twilight of a Crane"), staged by the Budô no kai company, and *Onna no isshô* ("The Life of a Woman"), performed by the Bungaku-za company, became classics of the modern repertory.

The year 1950 was a turning-point in post-war history. The Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union had settled in. When war broke out in nearby Korea, anti-communist purges in Japan spared neither the cinema nor the theatre. One Shingeki company, the Haiyû-za, built a small theatre in 1954 (the Haiyû-za gekijô) where it staged *Onna no heiwa*, a production of Aristophanes' *Women in Parliament*. It is still unusual today for a Shingeki company to have its own theatre; most of the time they hire theatres for their plays.

The Haiyû-za became the leading Shingeki theatre when in 1949 it founded its own training centre, which came to provide it and other companies with a plentiful supply of actors. Shiki, a company founded by Asari Keita and Kusaka Takeshi, reappraised the approach which had presided over the origins of Shingeki, that of Stanislavsky-inspired realism. It specialized in the plays of Jean Giraudoux and Jean Anouilh, which had very rarely been staged in Japan. In 1955, the Bungaku-za (Literary Theatre) Company had a hit with *Hamlet* in a version translated and directed by Fukuda Tsuneari. Shakespeare is the most widely performed playwright in Japan. In terms of the number of performances per author, he shares first place with the Kabuki playwright Kawatake Miluami. The diversity and depth of his work are a source of endless fascination to theatre lovers.

One important feature of post-war Shingeki was the introduction of Bertolt Brecht's plays and theories of drama. Brecht's *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* was first staged in Japan by Senda Koreeya with the Haiyû-za yôseisho (School of Dramatic Art) in 1953. Debate about Brecht's ideas on drama went hand in hand with questioning about the renewal of the modern world through theatre.

In 1957, for the first time in the history of a Shingeki company, the Bungaku-za used Kabuki actors in a Fukuda Tsuneari play (*Akechi Mitsuhide*). The first tour of Japan by the Moscow Art Theatre the following year had a tremendous impact. It marked the start of a wave of tours by famous foreign companies that began to develop in the second half of the 1970s.

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***Les Misérables*, a musical comedy adapted from Victor Hugo's novel, being performed at Tokyo's Imperial Theatre (1997).**

Notes from underground

While big demonstrations against the renewal of the security treaty with the United States were taking place in 1960, Bungaku-za brought the theatre of the absurd to Japan with their production of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The play hinted that, like Godot, the change long awaited by part of public opinion would not appear. . . . A series of plays by Beckett and Eugène Ionesco were produced around this time, which also saw the first performances of Shingeki outside Japan.

The events of spring 1960 also left their mark on the world of Shingeki. The authority of the major companies such as Haiyû-za, Bungaku-za and Mingei began to be questioned and new companies critical of their predecessors emerged. This was a period of intense experimentation and creative activity. Doubts about the traditional left were accompanied by criticism of Shingeki.

The aim behind this experimentation was to create a different theatre from Shingeki, and renewal took an extreme form in 1967 with a Karagumi (situationist theatre) performance. In the same year the Tenjôsajiki ▸

***Women's time has come*, a play for the commercial theatre staged in Tokyo by the all-female Takarazuka company.**

© ITI Tokyo

company (The Gallery Company) broke new ground as part of the drive for "the rehabilitation of theatre". Faces wearing way-out Kabuki make-up appeared on stage and pop songs announced that Shingeki was a thing of the past. A world of human folly was portrayed in an atmosphere of utter confusion. Put out of their stride by the emergence of such a different kind of theatre, critics soon dubbed it *Angura* ("underground").

Each underground company had its own special features, but they all shared a belief in the need to destroy the traditional perception of theatre and staging, in the importance of the actor's role, in a new approach to Nô and Kabuki, in the abandonment of realism and in exploration of the human unconscious.

The Tenjôsajiki company, directed by Terayama Shûji, staged many bold experiments, changing its use of space and stagecraft with each performance. For *Nokku, street theatre*, in 1975, Terayama transformed Tokyo's Suginami district into a vast stage, injecting dramatic structure into daily life and obliterating the boundaries between reality and fiction. The action took place in thirty different places at once, making it impossible for one spectator to see the entire show.

A scene from Kabuki, one of the classic forms of Japanese theatre, directed by Oguri Hangan (1997).

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Strolling Dreamers

Starting in the 1970s young playwrights, directors and actors influenced by Angura founded a host of small companies which took their cue from the main trends of contemporary theatre. Among the most influential figures were Tsuka, who cynically examined the foibles of Japan and the Japanese, and Higashi, the author of a musical comedy, *Tokyo Kid Brothers*. Angura abolished the distinction between author, director and company manager, a move that came to be widely followed.

Japanese society in the 1980s became highly prosperous and experienced the euphoria of running the world's second biggest economy after the United States. Concern about the unemployment of young people disappeared, and so did anxiety about the economic future. This was the context which gave rise to Noda Hideki with his Company of Strolling Dreamers (*Yume no Yûminsha*) and Kôkami Shôji with his Third Stage (*Dai san butai*).

One distinctive feature of their style is the absence of any "ordinary" people from the stage. The heroes are young people of indeterminate social background. In its stagecraft and its language this kind of theatre jumps from one form to another. It turns away from Angura's dark, brooding expressiveness and stages shows full of light music and dancing, in which sensitivity is the keynote. This form of theatre, very different from Shingeki and Angura, attracts crowds of young spectators from all social classes. Many companies have taken part in this kind of experimentation.

In the 1990s, however, most of the companies practising this type of theatre have had chequered careers. The Company of Strolling Dreamers no longer exists. The playwrights of note are those who have gone back to everyday life and language. This marks a return to early Shingeki. Independent playwrights are making a come-back, and young authors are producing their works with established Shingeki companies. Whether these playwrights work independently or not, I feel that contemporary Japanese theatre is once again at a turning point. ■

Despite the sweeping changes that have occurred since the Soviet era, Russian theatre is still a crucible of collective enthusiasm

A Gagarin © Novosti, Paris

A common home

BY ANATOLY SMELIANSKY

***Ten Days That Shook the World*, directed by Yuri Lyubimov at the Taganka Theatre in Moscow (1965). The play is based on John Reed's eyewitness account of the 1917 Revolution.**

Just a hundred years ago, a famous encounter took place in a well-known Moscow restaurant, the Slav Bazaar, between the actor and director Konstantin Stanislavsky and the playwright and critic Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko.

They talked non-stop for eighteen hours and ended up agreeing to create a new company. Little more than a year later, the Moscow Art Theatre (MKhT) was born. It was to be a driving force of twentieth-century Russian theatre.

The Art Theatre gave rise to numerous other theatres and spawned many directors and actors. It also nurtured some well-known aesthetic critics and dissenters who developed their own approaches to theatre. The names of Vsevolod Meyerhold, Evgeny Vakhtangov, Mikhail Chekhov, Alexander Tairov and, in the European theatre, Bertolt Brecht, Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski are associated with the acceptance or aggressive rejection of the ideas of the Theatre's founders at the beginning of the century.

In the 1930s, Stanislavsky's ideas were glorified by the Soviet state and many of his opponents were liquidated. In reality, however, his official adoption was accompanied by the negation of all that he stood for. In the early 1930s, Stalin renamed the Art Theatre the "Theatre of Academic Art" (MKhAT), which was the signal for all the country's theatres to model themselves on the Soviet-style MKhAT. ▶

The leaders of the Revolution had realized immediately that the theatre could be used as a spiritual substitute for the Church they had dismantled. It would not be good for the holy places to remain empty. So for decades, until the fall of the Soviet Union, this model of a theatre-cum-church existed in one form or another. If it was sacrilege, it was also remarkably effective.

In Soviet Russia, the theatre replaced a parliament which had become just a rubber stamp, and a Church which had been half suffocated. Several generations of directors, actors and spectators had developed a kind of conditioned reflex. You didn't go to the theatre just for entertainment but for communion.

The elite's notion of communion *(sobornost)*, which was very popular with the Russian symbolists at the beginning of the century, now found an unexpected place in society. The theatre became perhaps the only focal point of Russian *sobornost*, a spontaneous living contact between people. Directors and actors made themselves servants of the cult of the theatre. Audience expectations rose, to the point where it was felt that life could be transformed by a moralizing production.

When the Soviet Union began to fall apart, the country had about 600 state-subsidized theatres with between twenty-five and 160 actors and actresses each. In the towns, the theatre usually stood near the offices of the regional party committee or the party-controlled House of Culture. The authorities stressed, even geographically, the importance of the theatre as a vital tool in leading the "flock".

© Brigitte Enguerand, Paris

Students of the Theatre Institute and young actors of Maly Theatre, St. Petersburg, in *Claustrophobia*, a play written by them and directed by Lev Dodin (1994).

But while the vast majority of theatres faithfully carried out their mission for the party, some managed to express dissent. Oleg Efremov, Georgi Tovstonogov, Yuri Lyubimov and Anatoly Efros were not content just to reflect the standard trends of Russian theatre. They also worked through troupes which were like families, designed not to break up after a few weeks but to stay together for years of joint creativity. This was the indelible feature of what was, and still is, understood in Russia as "theatre".

To be in the theatre in Russia is to share a common home and to devote your whole life to a joint endeavour. It's a long-term artistic association which demands a special set of structural, aesthetic and, especially, moral circumstances.

The crisis

The coming of freedom put our biggest theatre "temples" to the test. The deaths of Efros and Tovstonogov plunged the Art Theatre and the Taganka Theatre, the two biggest theatres under communism, into crisis. After a long internal conflict which spilled over into the newspapers, the Kremlin decided in May 1987 to split up the Art Theatre. Efremov remained as head of one half of the MKhAT while actress Tatiana Dronina took charge of the other. The split quickly turned ideological, with the first MKhAT naming itself the

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Konstantin Stanislavsky (right) and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko in 1923. In 1898 they founded the Moscow Art Theatre.

Chekhov and the second continuing to be called the Gorky.

While Efremov tried yet again to revive a "troupe of friends" and to get back to the founding tenets of the MKhT, the tempestuous amazon Dronina, who had no production or management experience, gathered so-called "patriotic forces" around her. At the Gorky MKhAT, it was even decided to celebrate Stalin. At the end of a production by Sergei Kurginian based on Mikhail Bulgakov's play *Batum*, the white-uniformed generalissimo looks pensively into the distance and the crowd rises as one on hearing the sound of the abolished Soviet national anthem and its words: "Stalin taught us to be true to the people. He has inspired our work and achievements."

From temple to entertainment hall

The two MKhATs, both of them in Tverskaya Street, are a good illustration of the present state of Russian theatre. A similar thing happened at the Taganka Theatre. When Lyubimov returned there, he was greeted as a hero and the audience chanted "stay! stay!" Some people wept. The spring of 1988 was still a heady time in Moscow. He stayed, dug up plays which had been banned and put on others, including Nikolai Erdman's *The Suicide*, Pasternak's *Dr Zhivago* and Dostoyevsky's *The Adolescent*.

But the collapse of the Berlin Wall didn't bring success. Lyubimov no longer had anyone to fight against. He had returned to a different country, something he didn't immediately grasp. When he did, it was too late. His main opponent was a member of his troupe, one of his pupils, Nikolai Gubenko. The dispute at the Taganka took the form of a battle over property, but as at the Art Theatre, it was tinged with ideology. Gubenko was close to the communists, led by Zyuganov, and as his fellow actors said wryly, he had gone "from the Taganka to the Zyuganka".

In this situation, the days of the Soviet theatre came to be regarded with nostalgia. Though squeezed dry by censorship and isolated by an "iron curtain" from theatre developments in the outside world, the best productions of that era were an expression of the society's spiritual life. One might say, recalling Stanislavsky, that it was a theatre with "too much to do".

In the new, relatively free atmosphere, the Russian theatre lost its special importance. The "super-theatre" became just theatre. Such downgrading affected every aspect of intellectual life. The print run of "heavy-weight" ▶

Scene from the first act of Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko's 1902 Moscow Art Theatre production of Maxim Gorky's *The Lower Depths*.

© Novosti, Paris

© Marc Enguerand, Paris./Festival d Avignon 1997 (France)

Alexander Ostrovsky's *Wolves and Sheep*, directed by Piotr Fomenko (1997).

newspapers and magazines fell tenfold, sometimes a hundred-fold. Playwrights, directors and authors who had thought of themselves as good shepherds of the people were now confused. Their books were no longer published and their plays became only one of many leisure activities.

It was something quite new for Russian theatre people to be just another part of the modern entertainment industry. Artistic freedom was no longer felt to be something special and healthy. People very quickly adjusted to the new scene, just as they do to the air they breathe.

The system of state subsidies for theatres no longer covered half their budgets. In an effort to survive, Moscow theatres opened casinos and night-clubs on their premises. Many of the old "theatre show enterprises," as the Soviet authorities officially dubbed theatres, became criminal show enterprises. With a high degree of symbolism, signs saying "Money changed here" were posted outside the capital's biggest theatres. Just as the whole country was changing its blood, so were the theatres. That said, it was hard to see what was being exchanged for what and, as it were, at what exchange rate. The loss of social status and of the saintly feeling that you were at the top of the tree, which were embedded in the genes of Russian artists of every kind, was one of the most important results of the change.

At the crossroads

The new class invented its own structures and took to what was called "tusovka", a slang word of the new Russia which is difficult to translate. The word evokes big extravaganzas, endless birthday celebrations, the razzmatazz of publicity, banquets, exchanges of honours, orgies of words and other such pleasures which Russia had forgotten while frozen under communism.

In the new Moscow, political, religious and "artistic" tusovkas intermingled. The same people went from event to event, variety artists hobnobbed with the high clergy and satirists with KGB bosses. The president sent his best wishes to the biggest tusovkas, thus marking the transition of the post-Soviet artistic elite to a new lifestyle.

The Russian theatre embraced the new trend, of which it was simultaneously recorder and victim. "Perestroika" plays were built around turning everything upside down. The tired old heroes and institutions—leaders of the Revolution, party secretaries and collective farm virtuosos—were exposed and jeered at. The popular actors who once played Lenin now depicted the moving figure of the murdered Tsar Nicolas II.

Then came new characters: "international girls," evil KGB agents, the heroes of the dissident movement. The puritan language of the old era disappeared from stage and screen as easily as the taboo of sexuality. A naked body and a daring speech became a kind of symbol of the freedom we had gained. "A stinking mixture of blood and excrement," was how elderly critics described the new art forms.

As Russia entered the market economy, the theatre began to depict the emergence of a new kind of human being, the transformation of Soviet Man into the "nouveau riche" or "new Russian." It was often hard to make out any difference between the subject of the artistic study and the resources used to carry it out. Socialist realism and "capitalist realism" turned out to be twins.

Renewal

There are no reliable statistics, but most theatres in the capital are clearly full again, after a crisis period in the early 1990s. The country is coming out of a critical phase and the healthy theatre attendances of the past two years are striking evidence of the change. The advent of the free market has of course produced the kind of openly commercial operations familiar in Europe and the United States.

More interesting are the persistence and survival in Russia of what could be called, not so much home-made theatre as cult theatre. In a basement on Povarskaya Street, not far from where Stanislavsky and Meyerhold set up

a studio at the beginning of the century, is Anatoly Vassiliev's School of Dramatic Art. This is a modern experimental theatre laboratory not especially noted for its annual "productivity" level, but its existence is crucial to theatre in Moscow. Vassiliev's most recent work, *The Lamentations of Jeremiah,* was closer to a religious and liturgical event than to traditional theatre.

Vassiliev is not alone. In St. Petersburg, Lev Dodin is also trying to preserve a Stanislavsky-style repertory theatre capable of withstanding the context of rampant capitalism. Among the popular new theatres are the Piotr Fomenko Workshop and Sergei Jenovach's theatre. Also popular are the shows put on by Kama Ginkas, usually at the small Young Moscow Theatregoer's Stage (TIouZ). This is serious new work, highly representative of the creativity of the new Russian theatre.

In June 1997, an international conference was held at the Art Theatre on the Slav Bazaar, the meeting that laid the foundations of twentieth-century Russian theatre. It was attended by all of Russia's leading stage directors and many of their European and American colleagues, who reflected on the theatre achievements of the past century and the prospects for the next.

I think it was Dodin who came up with the best summary. For him, the Art Theatre of Chekhov and Stanislavsky's time was a model for "home-made" theatre, family theatre built on two distinct foundations—great idealism (which made the theatre into a kind of cult), and the kind of clearsighted economic calculation that is inevitable in a market economy.

The twentieth century rubbished these two foundations. Idealism degenerated into Stalinism or fascism. Economic rationality and honesty degenerated into cynical wheeling and dealing. The laws of the marketplace have infiltrated the remotest corners of the theatre business and robbed our theatre of some of its meaning.

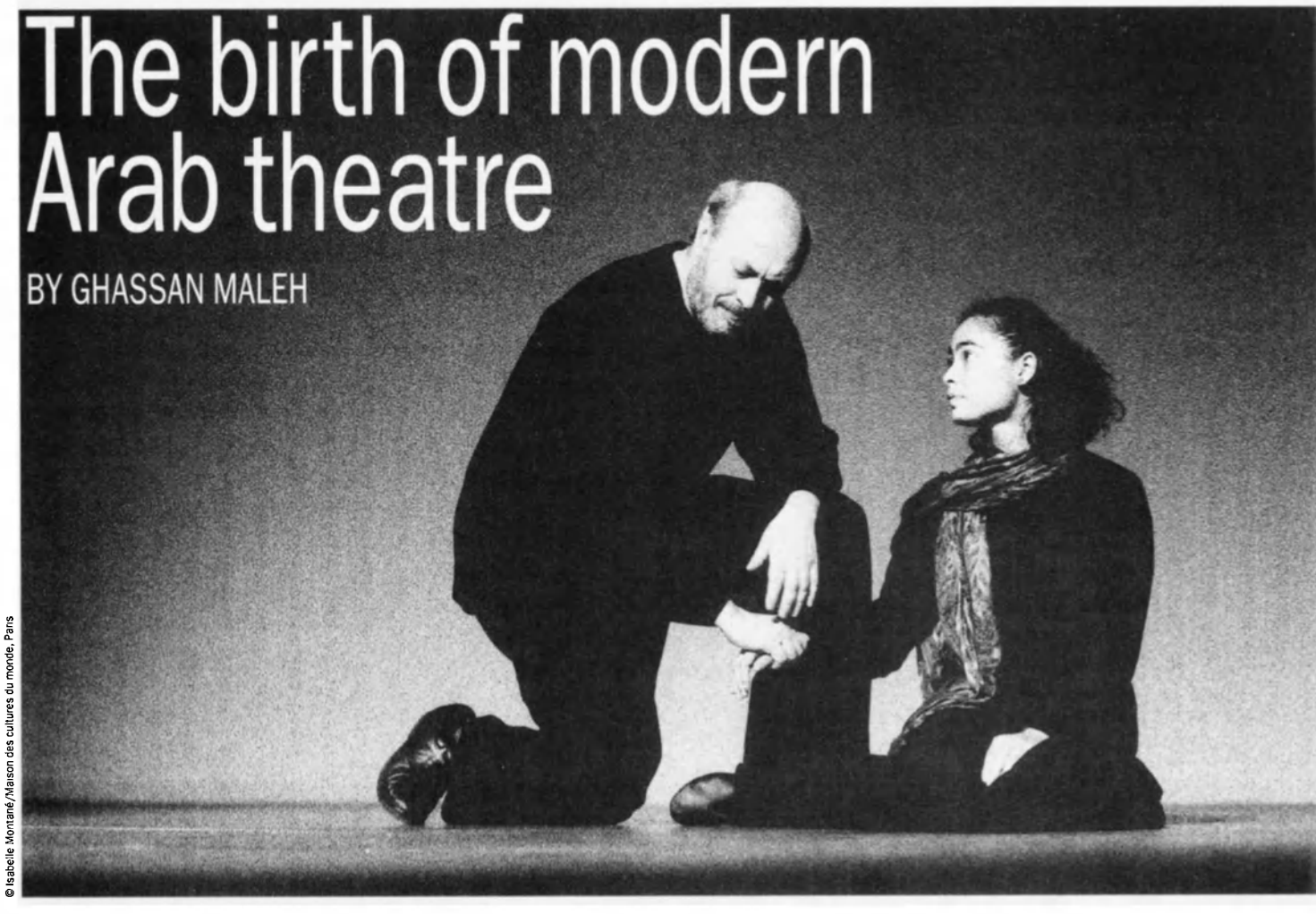
We are back with the same problems which were being argued about at the beginning of the century. To start the new one, Russia needs another Slav Bazaar. But is it only the Russian theatre which needs something like that? ■

***The Lamentations of Jeremiah*, a work inspired by the Old Testament book of the same title, was set to music by Vladimir Martinov and directed by Anatoly Vassiliev (1997).**

© Marc Enguerand. Paris/Festival d'Avignon 1997 (France)

The birth of modern Arab theatre

BY GHASSAN MALEH



© Isabelle Montané/Maison des cultures du monde, Paris

Outward-looking pioneers in the 19th century set the scene for contemporary theatre in the Arab world

The Lebanese playwright Roger Assaf wrote, directed and acted in *Samar*, above (1997).

In February 1848, a Beirut merchant named Marun Al Naqqash (1817-55), put on in his own home a performance of '*Al Bakhil*, a play based on Molière's *L'Avare*. When the curtain rose he stood before the audience and delivered a prologue in true eighteenth and nineteenth century European style. He promised to introduce his people to a new artistic form, "a literary theatre... which shall be Western gold in an Arab mould". This form, he added, was of two kinds: drama and opera. "It would have been much easier for me," he said, "to start with the former but I decided to take the harder course... because it is more likely to meet with the approval of the audience and delight them. I trust that I have made the right choice... and that you will benefit from this theatre, for it teaches... proper manners, proffers good advice, polishes and refines."

Al Naqqash went on to develop his adaptative approach, still embryonic in *Al Bakhil*, in plays which were based on *The Arabian Nights* and performed in a playhouse which he built for the purpose. After his death, his brother Nicolas and his nephew Salim continued his work, taking French theatre as their major source of ideas and material. But faced by what they considered insufficient appreciation for their efforts they left for Egypt where they contributed to a budding dramatic movement.

Meanwhile another merchant, Sheikh Abou Khalil Qabbani (1836-1902), was doing in Damascus what Marun Al Naqqash had started in Beirut, although unlike Al Naqqash he was not versed in foreign languages and had not travelled abroad. He may have seen performances of Italian operettas by visiting troupes and plays staged by Turkish actors, but on the whole he was solidly rooted in the local tradition. His major source was *The Arabian Nights*.

Al Qabbani set out to establish theatre in Arab society as a form of entertainment that was deeply rooted in tradition yet open to new ideas and to the outside world. He failed because conservative forces plotted against him with the authorities in Istanbul and did not

give up until orders were given for his theatre to be closed.

Like Salim Al Naqqash and others from Beirut, Al Qabbani packed up and left for Egypt, where a young man named Ya'coub Sannu' (or Abou Naddara as he preferred to be called) had launched a new theatre movement. As a young man Ya'coub Sannu' had been sent to Europe, where he learnt languages and developed a passion for the theatre. On his return to Egypt he worked with European troupes whose repertoire consisted mainly of operettas and farces and decided to emulate them. Initially using these two Western forms, he drew upon aspects of local tradition that were conducive to the development of musical drama. His characters were deeply rooted in the social fabric and used the vibrant spoken Arabic of everyday life. With Sannu' the Western gold and the Arab mould merged very well—although one sometimes wonders which is the gold and which is the mould. The written text, the form, and the Italian frame stage were Western-inspired innovations, but everything else was deeply rooted in popular tradition.

Sannu' wrote scores of plays, most of which were performed with him as principal actor, director, producer and prompter. The majority of his plays dealt with contemporary issues, often in a comic vein. Many had political overtones which made him enemies and alienated some of his former friends and sponsors including the Khedive himself. His theatre survived for only two years until it was closed down by the authorities.

Traditional shadow theatre

Further west, traditional Arab forms were holding their own in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. All three countries had an active shadow play theatre tradition. One form, featuring a satirical figure called Garaguz, was banned by the French authorities in Algeria in 1848 on account of its anti-French political bias. In addition to Garaguz, shadow theatre in both Morocco and Tunisia featured a *rawi* or narrator who told stories to a musical accompaniment. In Morocco the Islamic Ashura festival was celebrated with performances reminiscent of medieval miracle plays. Western forms, except for Sicilian marionettes, were late reaching the Maghreb countries, and Western influence only began to make itself felt when travelling Egyptian companies visited Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco at least half a century after Al Naqqash, Al Qabbani and Sannu'.

Until the middle of the twentieth century, successive generations of theatre practitioners carried on where the pioneers had left off. The end product almost invariably appealed to local taste, speaking the language of the audience, which was often drawn into the action despite the increasing impact of the distance imposed by the Italian frame indoor stage—earlier traditional performances usually took place outdoors in courtyards.

Many translations were made of works by European dramatists such as Racine, Corneille, Shakespeare, Sheridan and Goldoni. Most of them were adaptations in which translators and directors "improved" texts or adjusted them to suit contemporary taste. *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, rendered as *Martyrs of Love*, ended happily and was full of song and music. During this productive period Arab theatre professionals considered the world drama tradition as their own and used it freely, often shaping it to their needs. There were perhaps more theatres per head of population in the Arab world then than there are today and intense activity in the theatre generated widespread interest and debate about the objectives of drama and the forms of Arabic that should be used in it.

George Abyad (1880-1962) was one major figure in the history of the Arab theatre in this period. He became widely known for the formal style and eloquent literary language of his adaptations of Western plays, mainly ▸

A Midsummer Night's Dream **by William Shakespeare, directed by Khaled Galal (Egypt).**

© Ninth International Cairo Festival for Experimental Theatre, 1997 (Egypt)

French classics, but soon turned to Arabic plays. By virtue of his foreign training which dictated the kind of plays he chose and his exaggerated acting style he helped to move Arab theatre away from its traditional popular audience to a more cultivated and more intellectual public.

For much of the first half of the twentieth century there were two types of play in Arab theatre. On the one hand there were "serious" literary translations of Western plays and original Arabic "literary" compositions; on the other there were the situation comedies, farces and musicals which constituted the daily fare of the commercial theatre. With a few exceptions, notably Tewfik Al Hakim, there was very little creative talent at work in Arab theatre by the mid-1950s. Much had been achieved, however, particularly in Egypt, where a Higher Institute for Dramatic Art and a national theatre company had been established.

The call of modernity

A new era in the history of modern Arab drama began in the late 1950s with the development of a type of communal drama which could contribute to the wider socio-political awakening. The entire Arab world was responding to the call of modernity by developing its academic and cultural institutions, interacting with the outside world and reacting to its challenges.

The fifth of June 1967, marking defeat in the Six-Day War, brought home to many Arabs the need for political stability and transparency, democracy, dialogue and debate, objective analysis and freedom from rhetoric. It was thought that drama could contribute to this process by drawing on and contributing to national identity, without however excluding foreign cultural influences. Direct imitation of Western plays was to be shunned, but translation was encouraged and assimilation promoted.

In countries such as Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, specialist drama magazines were started, national or state-supported theatres were promoted and national theatre companies formed. Artistes were sent abroad for training and foreign troupes were warmly welcomed. In the universities student drama throve. The coming of television brought performers an additional source of income which further consolidated their financial and social status. Cultural co-operation agreements with other countries, socialist countries in particular, opened important venues for the study of such arts as puppetry, ballet, folk dance, music, acting, directing and film-making. Altogether, the 1960s were a time of intense activity in the performing arts not only in Egypt but practically everywhere else in the Arab world.

Representative figures of the effervescence of the 1950s and 1960s included Nu'man Ashur, Yusuf Idris, Alfred Farag, Mikhail Roman and Mahmoud Dyab, all playwrights working in Egypt; Roger Assaf and Nidal Ashkar (back from France and England respectively), Yacoub Shadrawi (back fom Moscow) and the Rahbani brothers (pioneers of the operetta revival in Lebanon and the Arab world) in Lebanon; Saadalla Wannous (back from Cairo and Paris) and Rafiq Sabban (back fom Paris) in Syria and Yusuf El Ani in Iraq.

A dramatization of *Crime and Punishment*, based on Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel, directed by Farid Al Zahiri (Yemen).

© Ninth International Cairo Festival for Experimental Theatre, 1997 (Egypt)

Audience participation

They all believed in the theatre as a moral and political force and shared a determination to produce good theatre based on tradition without being inward-looking. Yusuf Idris led the call for "an Egyptian theatre", arguing that most of the plays produced were Egyptian in dress, dialogue, characters and situations but Western in structure and style. He advocated a return to *Al Samer*, that combination of one-man chorus, narrator, entertainer and Shakespearean fool, who worked alone or with one assistant and perhaps a dancer, drawing on the circle of onlookers around him.

© Ninth International Cairo Festival for Experimental Theatre, 1997 (Egypt)

***A chaque parfum, une fleur,* written and directed by Rida Drira (Tunisia).**

Al Samer, Idris argued, always achieved theatricality, meaning the active participation in the action of all the people present, actors and audience alike. "If the action involves dancing, all must dance; if it involves singing, all must sing. Sender and receiver, actor and audience, must become one; both sending and receiving". The performance should be based on a text but should allow for much improvisation on the part of both cast and audience. Breaking through the barrier between stage and audience is a feature of ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian rites, classical Greek theatre, of the age of Shakespeare and of course of contemporary European and Eastern theatre. Idris knew this but did not seek to use audience participation as a mere technique or device; he wanted it to permeate the whole performance, expressing the collective folly, or wisdom, of the community.

A few years after Idris had put forward his theory about *Al Samer* and put it into practice in *Al Farafir*, Saadalla Wannous (1940-1997) published his *Manifestos for a New Arab Theatre* in which he, like Idris, but perhaps more forcefully, put the emphasis on the public and the relationship between the public and the stage. The ultimate aim of a performance, he wrote, is to make us "come out of our skin, unite in one group, and become aware of our common destiny as a group, and of the laws governing that destiny."

Wannous translated his ideas into a play, *An Evening Entertainment for the Fifth of June*, that was a major landmark in his career. In this play the line between actors and audience gradually disappears until the director/actor shouts in fear and consternation "what is all this leading to? Has the theatre turned into a public square or what?" This is exactly what Wannous wanted: the theatre turns into a public square regardless of the consequences, which, in the play, are the detention by the authorities of the entire audience.

Wannous used the play-within-a-play device in several of his later works, often in conjunction with the device of the café story teller. He explored history simultaneously through the eyes of narrators and listeners, who are the audience both within and outside the play-within-the play. He wanted to generate this kind of dialogue in what he called the theatre of politicization, which is in many respects both total theatre and theatre as entertainment.

Much of what Wannous advocates may echo Brecht, Piscator, Peter Brook or Peter Weiss, but much of what he practised is also reminiscent of the work of the three major pioneers, Al Naqqash, Al Qabbani and Sannu'. Wannous repeatedly calls on us to turn to them since he feels they represent an outward-looking approach to theatre. ■

Paul Mark Smith © Panos Pictures, London

The theatre of the oppressed

BY AUGUSTO BOAL

Above, scene from a street theatre show staged by the Luz de la Luna company in Bogotá (Colombia).

Some people do theatre because it's their job, their craft or their calling. But all men and women on Earth are a theatre in themselves. It's second nature to them.

In every one of us there's an actor—someone who acts—and a spectator, who watches the actor acting. We have the ability to watch ourselves doing things. The other animals, even in front of a mirror, don't recognize their own reflection, so don't use it to improve their own appearance. Cats don't look at themselves in a mirror to smooth their whiskers and lions don't comb their manes in front of one. But we humans, even without mirrors, can watch ourselves watching.

But we aren't content, any of us, to be just actors and spectators of ourselves. We also write our own scripts for every scene we are involved in. We are in charge of the wardrobe of costumes to be worn wherever we are (at home, at work, during time off). We are also the directors who stage our own actions.

So every human being is a miniature theatre. The "theatre of the oppressed" is based on this simple notion of elementary theatre, where everyone is involved, whether trained for it or not.

On stage, actors experience passions and emotions just as we do in real life. And we, in real life, express ideas and feelings through dialogue, movements and voice intonations, just like actors. With one difference: the actor on stage is aware of using theatrical language whereas we use language without this awareness (which is why we aren't so good at using it).

Everybody, not just orators, is capable of speaking. If we don't know how to swim in an Olympic swimming pool, we can all splash

The conviction that there is an actor in each of us is the driving force behind a form of drama that seeks to awaken consciences and change lives

about in the bath. We have all kicked a football around our backyards, even if we haven't played at Wembley or Maracaña.

Some sports engulf entire nations—like football in Brazil, baseball in the United States and table tennis in China—but only some athletes attain excellence. So it is with the theatre. There are professionals, but everyone can, and should, take part.

First steps

The theatre of the oppressed springs from these basic ideas. It was born some years ago in Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America when military dictators first censored plays and shows and then cracked down on theatre companies and actors.

At the time, I was running the Arena Theatre of São Paulo. They began by telling us what plays we should put on. The ones we chose were all either banned or censored. Then we lost the theatre itself when they forced us to make pointless alterations to it which we couldn't afford.

Each time, we responded by devising new kinds of activity. We ended up doing street theatre and staging plays in trade union halls, schools and churches. We had no money, so we had to do without scenery and costumes. We acted in ordinary clothes.

In the end, we lost everything when the police banned us from playing anywhere at all. It was only then, when we had neither theatre, repertoire, scenery, costumes nor stars, that we discovered the essential thing. Face-to-face with our audiences, we realized how like them we were, and also how different.

We had lost the rings on our fingers, but not our fingers; our costumes but not our bodies; our illusions but not our dreams. We were like our audiences because we were human beings like them. But we were also different because we were specialists in a craft. We could help the public make use of our craft.

This is how the first version of the Theatre of the Oppressed was born. We called it "Newspaper Theatre". We invented and developed thirteen ways of turning newspaper articles (or any other apparently non-dramatic material) into plays. Then we went to our audiences to tell them what we'd learned and to help them write and produce their own plays from texts they chose themselves.

For the first time, we were teaching our public the "means of production" instead of presenting them with a finished product. We weren't telling them "what to do" but "how to do it".

After we had set up dozens of popular groups, we had to stop because the dictatorship was becoming harsher and harsher. After many incidents, I had to leave the country myself.

A Salvadorian theatre group in a play about domestic violence (1996).

© Paul Mark Smith/Panos Pictures London

Fact or fiction?

The next version of Theatre of the Oppressed surfaced in Argentina in 1971 and was called "invisible theatre." The "El Machete" troupe that I led put together a play about hunger which was to take place, ironically, in a restaurant. The script, a joint effort, was ready and the production seemed OK. At first we wanted to stage it in the street, but Brazilian friends warned us. Argentina was going through a difficult transition to democracy and as a Brazilian, I risked getting deported and handed over to the Brazilian police.

In the end, my actors insisted that I should take part in the show. One of them suggested doing the play in a restaurant and having the actors come in incognito as if they were genuine ▶

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customers and without revealing that it was part of a play. I would go in before the others and sit at a table in a quiet corner to eat my steak. The actors would then come in and the various scenes would follow. There was one problem though. The play involved two waiters and a maître d'hôtel who would have to be played by actors. How would the real waiters and maître d'hôtel react to that?

We began the play while the other customers were eating and chatting. To our surprise and delight, at the very moment the actors were supposed to speak, a real waiter and the maître d'hôtel himself stepped up to say almost exactly the words in our script.

We were fascinated by this experience where fiction mingled with reality and became just as real, at the same time as reality became a kind of fiction. But what worried me was that the audience took part in the action without realising they were in a play which itself was inside a piece of reality. So where exactly were they, in fiction or reality? For them, how far was fiction real and reality fictional?

© Bernand, Paris

***Coup de poing sur la pointe du couteau*, a play written and staged by Augusto Boal in Paris in 1980.**

Spectators on stage

I continued doing this kind of theatre in several countries, always very successfully but always with some anxiety and also regret that it could not be done in an open manner.

We entered a new phase in Chaclacayo, Peru, where we devised "Forum Theatre" as part of the Alfin integrated literacy programme which was based on the ideas of Paulo Freire. I was promoting literacy through the theatre. Others did it through film, silk-screen printing, local languages or Spanish.

It was here that we first came up with a play in which the main character didn't know what he was supposed to do or else made wrong or unsuitable decisions. So I asked the audience what they would have done instead. There was a lot of response. So I suggested doing the play again with the same script, with the addition that if a member of the audience wanted to change something, they could stop the play there and then. The person would then take over from the actor and instead of

Opposite page, Augusto Boal (centre) directs a workshop. Right, warming up the audience before a performance (1980s).

© Margy Nelson/Centre du Théâtre de l'opprimé, Paris

just speaking, could explain his or her idea in dramatic form.

So the audience could use the same stage language as the actors to convey what they thought, what they wanted and dreamt about, and what they proposed. Everyone, freely and knowingly, would be "talking theatre".

"Forum Theatre" has become the most popular version of the Theatre of the Oppressed. At the eighth International Festival of the Theatre of the Oppressed, recently organized by the Mixed Co. in Toronto (Canada), as well as at an earlier festival put on in Rio de Janeiro by the Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed there, more than thirty countries were represented by theatre groups or "professional" users of the Theatre of the Oppressed, such as teachers, psychotherapists and social workers.

Internalized oppression

Later on, in exile in Europe, I came across forms of oppression more insidious than those in Latin America. My European friends told me of the oppression of feeling empty inside, of being unable to communicate, of being afraid of the future. At first I didn't take these kinds of problems seriously. Then I found that the suicide rate in the richest countries was far higher than in Latin America, and understood that if someone chose death rather than loneliness, it was a kind of oppression as real as any other.

At the Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed in Paris, over two years, Cecilia Thumim and I developed elaborate ways of expressing internalized oppressions, the ones we carry around inside ourselves. As the fifteenth-century Portuguese poet Sá de Miranda put it, "my biggest enemy is the one inside me, the one I carry in the core of my being."

When I got back to Brazil, I was elected a *Vereador* (city councillor) in Rio de Janeiro. I hired all the staff of my Theatre of the Oppressed centre, and throughout my four-year term we worked with needy communities (*favelas*), trade unions, schools, neighbourhood associations and old people's groups, landless peasants, black students, street children, Aids sufferers and others to create a sort of "legislative theatre".

We helped our audiences-cum-playwrights to write and produce their own plays, first in their own communities and then as part of "dialogues" between communities, so that everyone could see the oppression others suffered, and not just their own. Three times a year, we put on an outdoor festival to let the public know about us and give them a chance to take part in our "forum" shows.

For each show, one of us wrote a proposal which was sent to the "city council" where it was studied by our lawyers. Sometimes, the solution they recommended was an approach to the mayor's office or else a street event. Or our ▶

team would draft a law which I would present to the real city council.

An opportunity for dialogue

In all, we presented about fifty proposed laws, all of which came from the grassroots. They were about protecting old people, children, handicapped people and witnesses to crimes (to put an end to impunity, one of the scourges of Brazilian society), as well as measures against racism and all other forms of discrimination.

Thirteen of them were taken up by the council and became laws. So thirteen times we managed to make wishes come true, in the form of laws now in force all over Rio.

Why is the Theatre of the Oppressed so amazingly successful? First, we don't try to expound a message or a revealed truth. We try to ask the right questions instead of giving what we think are the right answers. Next, we offer a simple system of exercises, games and methods which anyone can handle but which can also be used for very complicated things like psychotherapeutic introspection. Thirdly, we create an opportunity for freedom which produces dialogue. All of us want to talk with people, to know their views and have the chance to express our own.

We know our identity is the result of what we are, but also of what others are and of what we are not. I am a man because there are women, white because there are black people, a father because I have children. Pluralism, differences and diversity are at the core of our existence. Because of them, we know who we are.

So the Theatre of the Oppressed is neither a closed dialogue with itself nor a collection of rules and obligations. It's a language. As such, it involves all areas of human activity, not just politics. It concerns teaching the young, psychotherapy, literacy and even the theatre itself. In 1997, I shall be having a new experience in Stratford-upon-Avon in England. With the Royal Shakespeare Company and using the play *Hamlet*, we are going to see if we can apply the psychotherapeutic methods described in my book *The Rainbow of Desire* to helping the actors get to grips with their roles.

This fascinating experiment has a great symbolic meaning for me. It means official recognition (for Shakespeare, I don't know how much more official you can get than the Royal Shakespeare Company) that the Theatre of the Oppressed is truly theatre. ■

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The International Theatre Institute, an international non-governmental organization (NGO), was founded in 1948 by UNESCO and the international theatre community. It has maintained formal associate relations with UNESCO since 1996.

Structure:

ITI today includes 95 national and associate Centres worldwide. A Centre comprises professionals active in the theatre life of the country and representative of all branches of the performing arts. Its activities are conducted both on a national and international level. The Institute has 7 Committees each with its own board and programme activities: Dance, Music Theatre, Playwrights, Theatre Education, Communication, Cultural Identity & Development and Dramatic Theatre.

The Institute is run by an Executive Committee composed of 14 elected members and 3 members co-opted following its biennial Congress, and by an elected Secretary General. The General Secretariat is based at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. Two regional bodies have been set up, in Africa and Latin America, as well as a Documentation Centre and Archive Centre for Asia (Bangladesh) and an Interregional Liaison Bureau for the national Centres of the Mediterranean region (Tunisia). The Albert Botbol University of the Theatre of Nations has two permanent bases, one in Tunisia and the other in Venezuela.

Objectives:

› To promote international exchange of knowledge and practice in the performing arts.
› To stimulate creation and increase co-operation among theatre people.
› To increase public awareness of the need to take artistic creation into consideration in the domain of development.
› To deepen mutual understanding, thus contributing to the consolidation of peace and friendship between peoples.
› To join in the defence of the ideals and aims of UNESCO.
› To combat all forms of racism or social and political discrimination.

27th ITI World Congress

ITI contributes to fulfilling its own and UNESCO's goals through a range of activities, including symposia, conferences, workshops, training courses, publications and the diffusion of international information concerning theatre and through various international events.

Hosted by the Korean ITI Centre, the 27th World Congress of ITI took place in Seoul from 14 to 20 September 1997 and included the following events:

› **The International Festival of Higher Education Theatre Institutes.** Eleven international and six Korean schools gave performances based on the theme "Tradition and Experiment: What does theatre seek to do in the 21st Century?"

› **An International Production of *King Lear*.** Planned and organized by ITI/UNESCO's New Theatre Project Group, this production of Shakespeare's play featured actors from Hungary, Germany, Japan, Korea and the United States and was staged by the Korean director Jeong-Ok Kim. The performances given in Seoul marked the start of an international tour.

Regular International Activities

■ World Theatre Day, 27 March

World Theatre Day, which was created in 1961, is celebrated annually by ITI Centres. Each year a noted theatre personality or an outstanding figure from another field is invited to share his or her reflections on theatre and peace between peoples. This "International Message" is translated into more than 20 languages, read to spectators before performances in theatres throughout the world, printed in newspapers and broadcast in the audio-visual media. World Theatre Day also features events ranging from small-scale demonstrations to big popular celebrations. In Bangladesh, for example, the entire theatre community joins in World Theatre Day celebrations, as more than 1,000 actors and actresses parade through the streets of Dhaka in theatre costumes. Theatre exhibitions are organized, and in the evening there is a lecture on theatre in Bangladesh and performances by the country's theatre companies.

■ The Albert Botbol University of the Theatre of Nations

The University of the Theatre of Nations (UTN), which has borne the name of its first director, Albert Botbol, since 1993, was founded in Paris in 1961 in connection with the "Theatre of Nations". Since 1984 the UTN has been itinerant, organizing each year with UNESCO's support a session on a theme relating to the culture of the host country. As a structure for exchanges between young professionals all over the world, its basic principles are inter-disciplinarity, international exchange, encounters between cultures, the development of joint projects, the presentation of work and mobility of activities.

■ The Theatre of Nations

Based in Paris until 1972, the Theatre of Nations became an itinerant international festival in 1975. The goals it pursues are those of quality, plurality and diversity in contemporary theatre. Its organizers work under the aegis of the ITI National Centre of the country in which the event is taking place.

In September 1997, the "Theatre of Nations Seoul-Kyonggi, 1997" included 5 separate but interrelated events that took place in Seoul (Rep. of Korea) and in the province of Kyonggi: the International Theatre Festival (some 15 international productions); the BeSeTo (Beijing, Seoul, Tokyo) Festival where plays from various Asian countries were performed; an Open Air Theatre Festival which presented some twenty productions (10 international and 10 Korean) on the theme of "Nature, human beings, environment"; and the Seoul Theatre Festival, which is celebrating its twentieth anniversary in 1997.

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Bibliography

■ ITI Publications

News from the ITI Secretariat (quarterly, in English and French)

The World of Theatre, 5th ed., 1997 (biennial, in English and French), features articles from more than 50 countries on theatre productions and recent developments during the last two theatre seasons, plus a calendar of main theatre events from 1995 to 1997.

World Theatre Directory, 4th ed., 1997 (biennial, bilingual English and French), a compilation by country of national theatre profiles, ITI centres, main theatres, festivals, publications, national organizations and educational and research institutions in the field of the performing arts.

■ Other publications

World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre. Europe (1994, vol. 1), ***The Americas*** (1996, vol. 2), *Africa* (1997, vol. 3). Forthcoming: ***The Arab World*** (vol. 4), *Asia/Oceania* (vol. 5). A project of ITI, FIRT, CIAT, SIBMAS with the support of UNESCO and the World Decade for Cultural Development. Published by Routledge, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE, United Kingdom. Tel: (44) (0)171-583 9855. Fax: (44) (0)171-842 2307

■ Most ITI Centres and Committees also have their own publications. For further information, please contact ITI.

Main international events in 1998

■ 27 March
World Theatre Day

■ End of June
celebration of the 50th Anniversary of ITI, Prague (Czech Republic)

■ 27 June-20 July
Theatre of Nations, Zurich-Lausanne (Switzerland)

■ End of June-beginning of July
International Festival of Higher Education Theatre Schools (ISTRAPOLITANA 98), Bratislava (Slovakia)

■ September
Symposium and Meeting of Higher Education Theatre Schools on Ancient Greek Drama, Nicosia (Cyprus)

■ 24-31 October
6th International Theatre and Puppet Festival of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso)

■ Last quarter
Regional Meeting of African Centres of ITI, Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso)

■ Last quarter
BeSeTo Festival 1998 in Tokyo (Japan).

■ December
Regional Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Centres of ITI, Havana (Cuba)

■ 10-14 December
6th International Music Theatre Workshop, Düsseldorf (Germany)

Some useful websites

International Amateur Theatre Association (IATA)
http://home2.inet.tele.dk/aitaiata

International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR)
http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/tfts/iftr/home.html

International Society of Libraries and Museums for the Performing Arts (SIBMAS)
http://www.let.uva.nl/vg/sibmas.html

International Organization of Scenographers, Theatre Architects and Technicians (OISTAT)
http://www.oistat.nl

commentary

Federico Mayor

Science education and sustainable development

The eve of a new millennium is an appropriate moment for UNESCO and other international organizations to reflect on their missions and the challenges that lie ahead.

Education for all remains the foundation for the achievement of sustainable human development. Basic education will continue to be an absolute priority, as it forms the essential first step towards further learning and plays a critical role in the shaping of values and the development of other necessary life skills. For this reason we must ensure that we enter the next millennium equipped and determined to "reach the unreached"—the world's 850 million adult illiterates and the over 200 million children still deprived of the right to education.

Education means mastering one's own destiny; it means personal sovereignty. It is the key to a genuine participatory democracy, which is closely related to development and peace. It is not just about knowledge; it is also about learning to do, learning to be and above all learning to live together. Education and teachers have an ethical function that must never be forgotten. In this connection, I should like to insist that while a market economy may be acceptable, a market society most certainly is not. What matters is not whether the market is free, but whether *people* are free.

A continuing process

Education can no longer be regarded as a one-chance affair. It must be seen as a continuing process whereby people are offered learning opportunities at a number of times throughout their lives. This "lifelong" and "life-wide" education for all demands the diversification and expansion of structures, and a better linkage between general and vocational education. It also implies the development of alternative educational opportunities and delivery systems, both formal and informal.

The role and functions of higher education systems and institutions need to be re-examined in the light of the profound transformations occurring in society today. Too often, the model of higher education we see in both the developing and industrialized countries involves an acceptance of old, inappropriate models that have remained largely impermeable to economic, cultural and social needs. We need also to reflect on Article 26.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which says that "higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit". Yes, merit and merit alone must be the criterion; and once this criterion is satisfied, there should be no limits—of means, age or sex—to access. Higher education must be universally available throughout life to all those who can benefit from it.

Secondary education must be treated as a level in its own right, not simply a means to placing students at the door of the university. Some of the most crucial needs in the educational system as a whole involve summoning individuals of all ages to such modestly paid but highly important work as primary and secondary school teaching. Secondary education must be recognized as pivotal to any education system.

A new strategy for science education

Science education is a key component of all education systems. The unprecedented growth in scientific knowledge and the dramatically increased complexity of this knowledge, together with an ever-increasing demand for high quality, constitute a challenge for science educators at all levels. How to introduce science and its breathtaking advances into limited curricula frameworks, what should be the correct balance between education in the basic sciences and the environment, and the interconnection of science education with education in technology—these are just some of the questions for which answers need to be found. Science education can, of course, only be satisfactory if account is taken of the cultural background and ethical implications of scientific progress.

The universities bear the great intellectual responsibility of identifying new strategies to promote science education and science teacher training, as well as setting and maintaining high professional standards in education for scientific research. Introducing new information technologies in science education, updating basic and specialized university courses, as well as

modernizing university laboratories remain a pressing need and a challenge for inter-university co-operation at the national, regional and international levels.

Action needs to be taken to build university science education in the developing and least developed countries. I am confident that the world scientific community would gladly commit itself to such action. UNESCO will spare no efforts in developing North-South co-operation via inter-university networks—as in the UNITWIN and UNESCO Chairs programme. I believe that UNESCO and the Third World Academy of Sciences are natural partners in such an endeavour.

Science today is at a turning point. All countries are having to face important decisions in this field. The richer nations are being required to rethink their science and technology priorities in the face of economic constraints and new political and ethical challenges, whilst developing countries are striving to build up the critical capacity necessary for effective science teaching and research leading to sustainable development.

If science alone is not capable of responding to people's aspirations for a better life, it has shown itself to be one of the major driving forces behind development. And yet this fact and its implications are still underestimated by decision-makers and politicians seeking short-term success and benefits. Short-termism in policy-making naturally involves dangers for the basic sciences. I believe that a healthy, productive scientific community is dependent upon the pursuit of basic research. We must ensure that the basic sciences are pursued by all nations, and that the common stock of fundamental knowledge is shared by all.

Haves and have-nots

Another feature of the sciences today is the continuing asymmetry in the distribution of scientific research capacity worldwide. The developing countries are responsible for a mere 10 per cent of research and development, whilst the member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) can claim 85 per cent. The world is still divided between the haves and the have-nots.

Each country's capacity to move towards sustainable human development depends on the existence of a critical mass of skilled human resources in the many scientific, technical and professional fields needed for addressing complex environment, resources and development issues. Training of the right kind and number of scientists, experts, technicians and educational personnel is urgently needed. UNESCO has highlighted a number of key problems within the context of the vicious circle of low human and capital investment/low productive returns in which so many developing countries are locked.

The first of these problems concerns the lack of "critical mass" at national level. Despite considerable efforts, many developing countries do not yet have sufficient trained personnel for sustainable development of their natural resources and suffer from a shortage of training facilities, especially for preparing teams of specialists to conduct studies and research useful for decision-making. The second problem is that established institutions and programmes may be of limited relevance to local conditions, with the result that many trainees in the developing world receive an education that has little bearing on their countries' social and economic needs. A third problem is lack of continuity. Students who return home with skills inappropriate to their countries' needs often end up abandoning their professional fields for other pursuits, such as business or government.

Another challenge for developing and industrialized countries alike is that nature does not respect the frontiers of scientific disciplines. Interdisciplinarity is required to study natural phenomena in all their complexity. And yet most current training programmes are sectoral or disciplinary and do not address the complex interactions between people, resources, environment and development.

All UNESCO's intergovernmental scientific programmes dealing with freshwater, oceanography, coastal and marine sciences, the earth sciences, and particularly land resources include a major component on training precisely oriented in this direction. The goal of the recently launched UNESCO-Cousteau ecotechnology programme is to identify, promote, and multiply transdisciplinary university efforts through financial assistance and networking and through the establishment of UNESCO-Cousteau Ecotechnology Chairs. Here, one of the basic tasks is to ensure that in villages and municipalities there are people with the knowledge and motivation to prescribe and perform all the "ecojobs" that are vital to the safeguarding of our environment.

Water and food security

Access to water is considered a basic human right, but is there—and will there be—enough water to go round in future? Can water be considered a free commodity which is available in unlimited quantities? The answer has to be no. Clearly, fresh water is—although renewable—a very limited and vulnerable resource. In my view water is going to be one of the major issues of the twenty-first century. We need to practise greater sharing of knowledge and resources in this field. My dream is to see the channelling of water from places where it is plentiful to others where it is scarce, together with the promotion through education of new attitudes to water, awareness of how precious a shared commodity it is.

The issue of food security will be ever-present in the first decades of the new century. The application of sound scientific knowledge will be an important factor in attaining sustainable food production, based on enhanced agricultural productivity, the conservation and management of natural resources, the protection of the environment, and the stabilization of world population. But once again the solution will be ethical—the greater sharing of knowledge and resources.

We must work together at the international and national levels to achieve a consensus among governments, the scientific community and the public at large on the importance and the role of science for the development of societies and the well-being of humankind. Only in this way can a solid foundation be laid for sustainable and equitable human development. ■

Greenwatch

Seaweed at your service

BY FRANCE BEQUETTE

For many people seaweeds are simply plants that grow in water. This was the accepted definition until the eighteenth century. They were regarded as "not proper plants" because they had neither flowers nor seeds. Today, this definition is out of date. A seaweed or alga may be either vegetable or animal, thrive in water or on land and interest zoologists as much as botanists.

Until the end of the 1950s, explains Bruno de Reviers, senior lecturer at France's Natural History Museum, scientists usually classified living things as either animal or vegetable. Seaweeds are in fact both. Says Reviers: "Seaweeds aren't simple, they're a bundle of organisms drawn from very different groups, sometimes quite philogenetically distant, that is, without direct links."

The overall view of the world of living things is changing very quickly. The vegetable kingdom was traditionally divided into thallophytes and cormophytes. The former (from the Greek word for a shoot, *thallos*) are "simple" (sometimes called "inferior") vegetation, without stems, leaves, roots or vein systems. They included seaweed, mushrooms, lichens, mosses and even bacteria. Cormophytes (from the Greek for stem, *kormos*) have stems, roots and flowers.

So how were vegetables distinguished from animals? By the ability of animals to move, something vegetables cannot do. But things get complicated when some animals, like sea anemones or coral, stay in one spot, while some microscopic seaweeds move about, like *Spirulina* (a blue seaweed) or diatoms (brown planktonic seaweed).

Another difference is that vegetables synthesize living matter by using the energy of light through photosynthesis, while animals trap and eat prey. But like carnivorous plants, some seaweeds can trap prey too and feed off organic material as well. To cover this complexity, biologists now offer five or more categories, and fan-like genetic lineages which take better account of the links between species.

A LONG HISTORY AND A COMPOSITE FAMILY

Seaweed is everywhere—on land, in the sea, in fresh or salty water, on our plates, in the pharmacist's cupboard, in water purification plants and even sometimes in our lungs. How many kinds are there? Estimates range from 20,000 to 130,000 species, but the real figure is probably around 45,000.

The very first marine plant forms equipped with chlorophyll which appeared on Earth were really just bacteria. They were blue, not green, because of the extra pigments associated with the chlorophyll. These pigments enable energy to be drawn from light, even when the rays received by the chlorophyll and necessary for photosynthesis pass through water. The best-known blue seaweed is *Spirulina*, found in lakes in North Africa, Chad, Mexico, Florida and the Bahamas. It is traditionally eaten in biscuit form and is cultivated these days in Viet Nam and Israel.

To grasp this diversity, we have to go back to the dawn of time. Oxygen is produced by the photosynthesis of blue seaweed. The ozone layer forms. About 700 mil-

Jim Holmes © Panos Pictures, London

Nets for commercial seaweed farming, Okinawa (Japan).

Giant kelp (*Laminaria macrocystis*), which may attain a length of up to 60 metres.

Nobert Wu © Jacana, Paris

lion years ago, there is a great burst of life and species multiply and diverge. Think of a crown with branches growing out from it. The blue seaweeds are very far away from the green ones, which in turn have no connection with the brown or red seaweeds. When the branches multiply, a link develops between green seaweed, ferns and mosses, and between dinophyte seaweed and the plasmodium parasite, which transmits malaria.

The common ancestors of some green seaweeds gradually emerge from the water and adapt to life in air. Oddly, some later return to living under water. Eel grass, for example, which serves as a nursery for young fish, actually flowers and reproduces through seeds. Like seaweed it can take in nutrition directly through its leaves, instead of its roots.

Brown seaweeds are microscopic like diatoms or huge like giant kelps, which grow to a length of 50 metres or more. They are found anywhere from the surface to 150 metres down. Dinoflagellates are single-cell organisms which form "red seas" and can secrete poisons. Some of these poisons, which are 100,000 times stronger than cocaine for example, attack the human nervous system and can destroy it. This is what happens in the case of ciguatera, a tropical disease caught from fish which have eaten poisonous seaweed (see "Natural Disasters: Be Prepared!" *UNESCO Courier*, October 1997).

THE USES OF SEAWEED

Alvaro Israel, of the Israeli National Institute in Haifa, has identified 107 types and 493 varieties of seaweed used by human beings. Most are grown and consumed in the Far East and the Pacific in accordance with long traditions. In Korea, for example, brown seaweed was found in the 10,000-year-old remains of meals in tombs at the Kiong-Lu burial grounds. In fourth-century Japan, the imperial court taxed the consumption of nori (*Porphyra*), wakame (*Undaria*) and konbu (*Laminaria*). Since then, the national dish of sushi (rice and raw fish) has been served with nori.

In the West, famine in the fifteenth century led people to eat seaweed, which is why it was disdained for so long in this part of the world. The Chinese eat the most seaweed these days—20 kg a head every year—followed by the Koreans and the Japanese, with 13.4 kg. About 60 varieties of brown and red seaweed are eaten in the forms of vegetables, pâté, jam, soup, bread or beverages. In the Pacific, delicious little "grapes" of caulerpa are served up as salads.

At the Seaweed Research and Development Centre (CEVA), part of the French Research Institute for the Use of the Sea (IFREMER), Joel Fleurence is looking into the nutritional value of seaweeds. "Their make-up," he says, "varies according to the species, the season, the surroundings, and geographical and physiological factors."

Edible seaweeds are mostly made up of carbohydrates—complex sugars and dietary fibres. Brown seaweeds contain the least protein—from 5 to 15% of their dry weight—but red seaweeds like *Palmaria* and *Porphyra tenera* have about 47% and rival soya (35%). They are very low in fats and contain mineral salts and trace elements such as magnesium, arsenic, copper, lithium, sulphur and zinc. They also have a full range of vitamins, especially vitamin A, ▶

A commercial seaweed farm laboratory in Morbihan (western France).

Yves Gladu © Jacana, Paris

lack of which can lead to blindness. Unfortunately they tend to disappear with drying or cooking, particularly vitamin C.

From seaweed, industry gets alginates and carrageens, valuable additives which feature in much of our food, for example, stabilizing sauces and making dairy products creamy. They hide behind the European Union code names of E400 to 407.

ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

But not just any seaweed can be harvested, any time or anywhere, since seaweeds easily absorb pollutants like mercury. They are increasingly being cultivated in specially chosen and protected places. In Asia, the 530,000 hectares of seaweeds farmed by 250,000 family businesses provide 950,000 jobs. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 7,637,000 tonnes of fresh seaweed were harvested in 1994, 90% of it cultivated.

The uses of seaweed seem endless. Do you want to make cherries without cherry flesh? Make your plants grow? Mop up urine in babies' nappies? Have waterproof umbrellas or mackintoshes? Make plastic floors and wood shine without polishing them? Make dental impressions without risk of burning the patient? Have photographic film where the gelatine doesn't melt in the heat? Or put out forest fires by dropping thick chemicals from firefighting planes? Biologists think a lot more research should be done into seaweed, especially for food purposes, when the world is going hungry and seaweed is everywhere. ■

FURTHER READING:

ALGAE, AN INTRODUCTION TO PHYCOLOGY, by C. van den Hoek, D. Mann and H.M. Jahns (Cambridge University Press, 1995)

LES ALGUES QUI NOUS ENTOURENT, by René Pérez (IFREMER, 1997)

Yves Gladu © Jocana, Paris

Found in seas throughout the world, *Laminaria* kelps grow in tidal areas.

initiatives

PROTECTING THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Fifteen countries and territories in the South Pacific have joined forces to develop and implement a 1997-2000 Action Plan to protect their environment. They are parties to the Agreement Establishing the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), which was opened for signature in 1993 and came into effect in 1995. SPREP, which has existed as a distinct entity since 1982, now has the status of an autonomous intergovernmental organization.

"Threats to the environment of the South Pacific are an integral part of global concern for environmental protection and sustainable development," the Plan states. "International agreements and action programmes, including Agenda 21, the Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Cairo Programme of Action on Population and Development, and conventions on climate change, biodiversity, ocean management and pollution, provide an important framework for regional action."

Besides facing the adverse effects of climate change, these Pacific island countries share problems of waste disposal and pollution prevention. Population growth, especially in urban centres, is putting increasing pressure on them. Disposal of solid waste is a particularly acute problem on very small islands, where recycling is often not economical and landfill is the method generally used. A range of liquid wastes risks polluting freshwater systems and groundwater in the region. Problems associated with the management of toxic substances such as pesticides and heavy metals are also giving rise to concern. The Waigani Convention aims to ban the import into all island member countries of the South Pacific Forum (with the exception of Australia and New Zealand) of hazardous and radioactive waste, and to control the transboundary movement and management of hazardous waste within the South Pacific Region.

In addition to a monitoring role, the SPREP Secretariat is involved in public awareness and training activities. It promotes the inclusion of environmental issues into school curricula and the publication of materials in local languages. Supported by donors, including several United Nations agencies, the World Bank, governments and non-governmental organizations, SPREP has an annual budget of approximately $7 million. But Pacific states complain they attract little outside attention. Much needs to be done to guarantee the future of these islands where 65 per cent of the population is under 23. ■

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AIRCRAFT AND THE OZONE LAYER

In the 1960s, before chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) were suspected of destroying the ozone layer, there were fears that it could be harmed by fleets of supersonic jets. These fears have resurfaced in the wake of a recent study by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Boulder (Colorado), which has revealed that exhaust produced by the Concorde supersonic aircraft contains a large quantity of sulphuric acid, the particles of which serve as carriers for the chlorine pollutants that destroy ozone.

Chourgnoz © Sygma, Paris

GAS TO THE RESCUE

A filling station with a capacity to fill 14 million bottles a year with butane gas (65,000 tonnes) was opened in March 1997 in Mbao, a suburb of Dakar (Senegal). Since a "butanization" campaign was launched in 1974, household use of butane increased from 10% in 1982 to 27% in 1992, a rise which is partly due to a 40% drop in the sale price of bottles. Butane use enables Senegal to save 70,000 tonnes of wood and 90,000 tonnes of charcoal annually, thus helping to reduce the pressure on forests as a firewood source.

INNOCENT SMUGGLERS?

"You wouldn't be the first ending up as a wildlife smuggler without knowing it". This is the slogan of an information campaign jointly launched by the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), the European Commission and TRAFFIC Europe, the wildlife trade monitoring programme of WWF and IUCN (the World Conservation Union) to inform citizens about a new law on wildlife trade that came into force in the European Union (EU) on 1 June 1997. WWF points out that "The EU is the world's largest legal importer of live cats and parrots, the second largest of primates, boas and pythons, and the third largest of tortoises and plants. Global wildlife trade amounts to an estimated $20 billion annually and involves 350 million plant and animal species." The new law requires an official permit certifying that animals or plants imported into the EU, or products made from them, come from legal sources.

HUNGARY ACTS ON CONSERVATION

A new Nature Conservation Act came into effect in Hungary on 1 January 1997. It is designed to conserve the whole of nature and not only the different categories of protected areas, an original approach which might well be taken up elsewhere. Wetlands have an important place in the legislation, and relevant articles include prohibition of the introduction of non-native fish species, of the release of harmful chemicals within 1,000 metres of a wetland shoreline, of water extraction where water reserves are necessary for maintaining the values of natural or near-natural wetland habitats, and of building within 50 metres of the shoreline of natural or near-natural watercourses.

GREENING INDIA'S COAL FIELDS

The World Bank recently approved a project to safeguard the environment and local communities in the coal-producing areas of India. Three-quarters of the $84 million required for this project set up by Coal India Ltd., one of the world's biggest coal companies, will come from the International Development Association (IDA). More than 600,000 employees and people living in the vicinity of 510 of the company's mines are involved. At the company's 10-hectare central nursery in the state of Orissa, more than 400 plant species are being grown to help reduce soil erosion and restore mined-out lands to productive use. Other programmes are designed to alleviate air, soil and water pollution and reclaim unproductive lands.

RESPECT FOR THE SEA

The Aquarium of La Rochelle (France) and the Nicolas Hulot Foundation for Nature and Humanity (formerly known as the Ushuaia Foundation) teamed up with the European Blue Flag (for clean beaches) in June 1997 to launch an operation called "The sea is not a dustbin" in two departments on France's Atlantic coast. Twelve thousand young people received an educational pamphlet informing them about the fragile ecological balance of the marine environment. The operation was particularly urgent since in 1995 the Aquarium's study centre for sea turtles recorded an abnormally high number of leatherback turtles washed up on beaches. Autopsies revealed that most of them had died from swallowing plastic bags, perhaps mistaking them for jellyfish.

BAD BUZZ FOR BEES

Experts estimate that 90% of wild bee colonies have been decimated in the last few decades as a result of harsh winters, wet springs, the massive use of pesticides, and two varieties of microscopic mites which suck the bees' blood. One mite settles inside the bee's respiratory tube, and the other, an external parasite which originated in Asia, attacks chrysalises, larvae and adults, causing major deformities that prevent the insect from fulfilling its vital functions. Wild bees play an important role in pollinating plants. What if they became extinct?

Stephen G. Maka © Ask Images, Paris

Patrick Lorne © Jacana, Paris

IRONBRIDGE GORGE

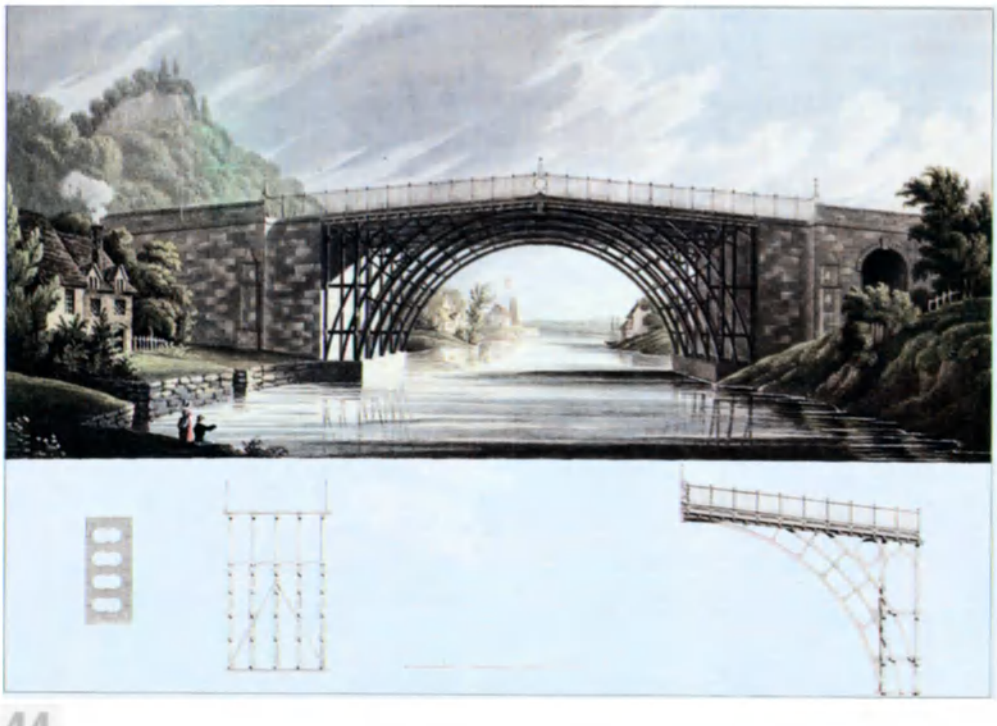
Symbolic birthplace of the industrial era

by Neil Cossons

The world's first iron bridge, built in 1779 across England's River Severn, came to epitomize the genesis of industrialization based on iron and coal

... If an atheist who had never heard of Coalbrookdale could be transported there in a dream, and left to awake at the mouth of one of those furnaces, surrounded on all sides by such a number of infernal objects, though he had been all his life the most profligate unbeliever that ever added blasphemy to incredulity, he would infallibly tremble at the last judgement that in imagination would appear to him.

With these apocalyptic words, written in 1801, the dramatist and traveller Charles Dibdin concluded his observations on the Severn Gorge in Shropshire, in the Midlands of England. What drew Dibdin and numerous other travellers there in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was the remarkable concentration of industrial activity, concerned in the main with ironmaking, spread along some five kilometres of the valley of the River Severn. Today this area, known as the Ironbridge Gorge, is a World Heritage Site in recognition of its outstanding importance in the early development of industrialization.



The Cast Iron Bridge over the River Severn near Coalbrookdale (1823), a coloured aquatint engraving by M. Dubourg.

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THE DARBYS OF COALBROOKDALE

The initial importance of the Severn Gorge stems from the pioneering work of the Quaker ironmaster Abraham Darby (1678-1717) who in 1709 developed a technique for smelting iron using coked coal as a fuel instead of the charcoal—made from wood—which was conventionally used at the time. He had taken over an existing charcoal-fired blast furnace built about 1638—in Coalbrookdale, a small side valley of the River Severn, and using local coal converted into coke he was successful in smelting iron ore to form a useable iron.

Although the impact of this new technology was limited at first, perhaps because there was little price advantage in coke-smelted iron, by the middle years of the eighteenth century Coalbrookdale and the surrounding area, by then in the hands of the second Abraham Darby (1711-63), had become an important source of good quality iron.

By using coked coal as fuel ironmasters were freed from the restrictions imposed by limited supplies of timber for charcoal. Already, by 1700, Britain had less forest cover

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The Iron Bridge over the Severn as it is today.

than any other European state, as a result of clearance for agriculture, cutting for charcoal and the demands of the Navy for shipbuilding. But coal was available in virtually unlimited quantities; and with coke as a fuel, blast furnaces could be built bigger, thus allowing larger castings to be made. Coke smelting was to become almost universal in the early years of the nineteenth century.

THE WORLD'S FIRST IRON BRIDGE

During the eighteenth century the Coalbrookdale Company became renowned not only for the *making* of iron but for *using* iron in new and innovative ways. Here the first iron rails were made along which ran trucks with iron wheels, pushed by men or pulled by horses, carrying iron goods down to wharves on the river. Then in the 1770s came the most dramatic and spectacular new use for iron, in the building of the world's first iron bridge.

The River Severn, England's longest river, was one of the keys to the success of the Coalbrookdale area. It provided ready access to outside markets for the products of the iron foundries and forges, for coal and clay from local pits, and for bricks, tiles and pottery. But the Severn also presented a barrier to the movement of goods by road from one side of the gorge to the other. The need for a bridge resulted in the novel proposal to build one of iron. Under the supervision of the third Abraham Darby (1750-89), then in charge of the Coalbrookdale Company, the bridge was cast and erected in the summer of 1779. It was opened on New Year's Day 1781, the first large-scale use of iron for structural purposes in the world and a remarkable demonstration of the utility and versatility of iron for construction. With a span of 30 metres, the graceful semi-circular arch reached across the gorge of the Severn at its narrowest point, an elegant centrepiece for what the cotton master Charles Hulbert was to call in 1837 "the most extraordinary district in the world".

As a river crossing and as a singular example of new engineering the Iron Bridge was an immediate success but its symbolic significance was much greater, not only in Britain but throughout Europe and in the United States. It epitomized the birth of a new era in human history in which industrial technologies were to provide immeasurable opportunities.

Even before the construction of the Iron Bridge the valley of the River Severn around Coalbrookdale was already becoming a magnet for all who wished to see the the birth of industrialization based on iron and coal. Many visitors from overseas came to see the furnaces and forges of the iron industry, coal pits and pumping engines, the canal with its celebrated inclined plane down which boats could pass to the Severn, the famous china works at Coalport and the Tar Tunnel nearby from which oozed natural bitumen used for waterproofing and medicinal purposes.

The gorge exercised a peculiar fascination on artists too. Here the combination of topography—the River Severn flowing through its precipitous gorge—and the smoke and flames of the furnaces and forges conspired to produce a scene at once picturesque and sublime. But one view above all others epitomizes the artist's vision of the new industrial Britain. It has become the archetypal description of the first industrial nation. *Coalbrookdale by Night*, painted in 1801, is the work of Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg (1740-1812). In it, ▶

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▶ the buildings of an ironworks are silhouetted against the glare of the pig bed as the furnace is tapped. In the foreground horses pull a wagon on an iron tramway among great castings. The painting has become one of the most famous images of the new industrial age.

DERELICTION AND DECAY

Throughout the nineteenth century industry thrived in the Ironbridge Gorge, as it was to become known, but its unique contribution was largely over. Other, better located, industrial areas overtook it in scale and influence. As canals and later railways linked the growing industrial regions of Britain to ports like London, Liverpool and Glasgow, Coalbrookdale became bypassed.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the Ironbridge Gorge was in decline. The Coalport China Works closed in 1926, production having moved to the Potteries of Staffordshire, but the foundries in Coalbrookdale remained, as they do today. The last of the tile works in the Gorge, where from the 1870s decorative floor and wall tiles had been made from local clay, closed in 1969. Dereliction and decay were the features that characterized the gorge. Cottages once occupied by workers in the iron, pottery or tile factories lay empty, shops closed as people moved away to find work elsewhere. To the north the area of the old East Shropshire coalfield was similarly in decline. The last pit closed in 1979.

But the distinguished industrial history of the Ironbridge Gorge was never forgotten. Writing in 1955 Michael Rix (1913-81), an architectural historian, referred extensively to the importance of the area and its monuments and used for the first time in print the term "industrial archaeology" to describe their significance. In 1964, in the third issue of the *Journal of Industrial Archaeology* he made an impassioned plea for the establishment of "national parks" of industrial archaeology stating that the "Ironbridge Gorge is a prime candidate for such a designation".

THE BIRTH OF INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY

By then the Coalbrookdale Company, now part of a larger industrial group, had excavated the Old Furnace and opened a small museum in 1959 to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Darby's smelting of iron with coke. And a growing number of those with an interest in industrial archaeology made pilgrimages to see the extensive remains, still surviving, of this pioneer industrial site.

Coalbrookdale by Night **(1801), an oil painting by Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg. This view of the Coalbrookdale furnaces and coke hearths has become a classic image of the Industrial Revolution.**

The years of industrial and urban renewal after the Second World War saw the sweeping away of much of the evidence of Britain as an early industrial nation but this destruction, inevitable as it was, led to a growing recognition that the archaeological evidence of the age in which we still lived—the industrial age—was disappearing too. Efforts began all over the country to record or preserve the archaeology of the Industrial Revolution.

Such was the extent of the decline in and around the Ironbridge Gorge and the area immediately to the north that it was designated as a New Town, making it eligible for special funding from government. Under the terms of the New Towns Act of 1946 new communities were established in many

parts of England, initially on green field sites, in order to accommodate the growing populations of great conurbations like London, Birmingham and Manchester. Under the same legislative provisions a second generation of new towns was created with the same aims but located in areas of industrial decay, high unemployment and social deprivation.

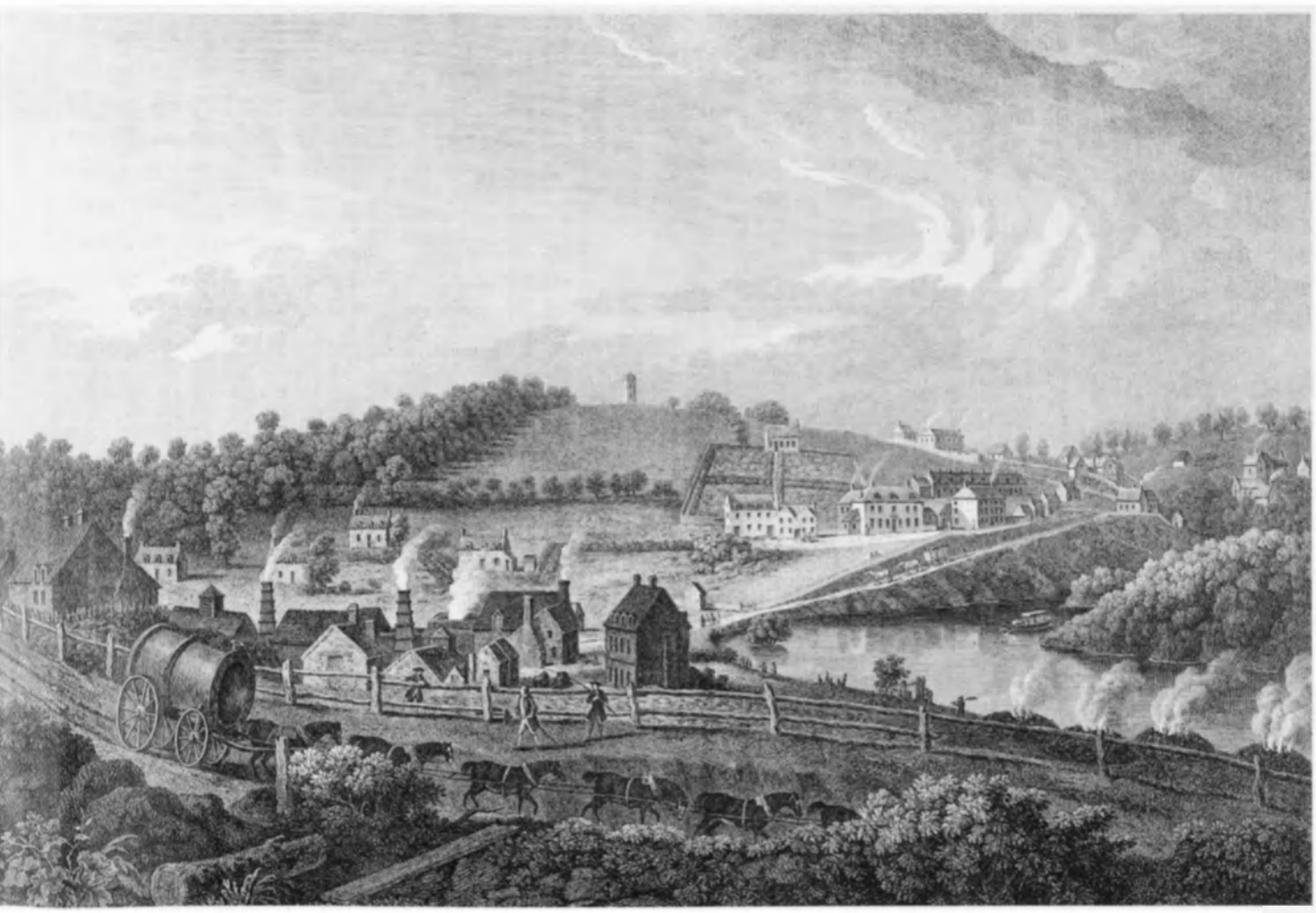
The old East Shropshire Coalfield became one of these new towns. The objective was to renew the worn-out infrastructure, build new houses, and encourage new industry to bring jobs to the area. The boundaries of the new town of Telford, named, appropriately, after the great civil engineer Thomas Telford who had established his early reputation in Shropshire in the 1780s, were specifically defined so that the Ironbridge Gorge was included in recognition of its historical and archaeological importance and amenity potential.

The new town could have spelled the extinction of the industrial archaeology of the Ironbridge Gorge. But from the outset enlightened planning and informed direction and management of the new town development corporation ensured that proper recognition was accorded to the most important sites and monuments. It was Telford Development Corporation that took the lead in establishing the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, charged with the daunting task of preserving and presenting to the public the evidence of early industry in the Gorge.

The Trust was formed in 1968 and within three years was engaged on a major programme of conservation and interpretation. Most of the physical requirements of the Gorge have been met. The whole of the valley has been designated as a Conservation Area, and there are now some 300 buildings listed as being of architectural and historical importance.

With the demise of Telford Development Corporation, its work of creating the new town substantially complete, one element of management and control has gone. The Corporation's support for the Museum Trust has gone too, to be replaced by a government endowment. Proper international recognition came with the designation of the Gorge as a World Heritage Site in 1986, the first area of industrial significance to be so listed.

Places like the Ironbridge Gorge, by virtue of their renown and the recognition that comes with it suffer peculiar forms of stress. Visitors in particular are an inescapable consequence of fame. They place stress on communities and on the fabric of historic environments. There is something slightly obscene about places that are monuments to work being given over to pleasure. But visitors have rights and demand access. If the Ironbridge Gorge is to take its rightful place as one of the great monuments to human endeavour then it needs all the attentive care and thoughtful respect that we can bestow. ■



The Upper Works at Coalbrookdale, an engraving made in 1758.

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Andrée Chedid

'An inner freedom'

Lebanese-born poet, novelist and playwright Andrée Chedid has published over thirty books including (in English translation) *Selected Poems* (1996), *Multiple Child* (1995) and *From Sleep Unbound* (1987). From her standpoint at the crossroads of several cultures she is an alert observer of the tensions and divisions of the modern world. In this interview with Martine Leca, she voices her commitment to freedom in direct, simple terms.

© Flammarion, Paris

■ **You often take the themes of your novels from the Bible. . . .**

Andrée Chedid: When they coincide with topical issues. If I only took my ideas from current events their range might be limited and they would fail to achieve a universal dimension. By bringing together the present and the distant past, myths are universal and open up avenues for exploring all the facets of human nature. When you immerse yourself in current affairs, you get carried away on the tide of events. Our inner life suffers if our eyes are glued to what is going on around us, whereas myth makes us step back.

■ **According to you, the world would be a more tolerant place if it were ruled by women.**

A. C.: A good question. Guided by their maternal instinct, women would probably be less naturally inclined to resort to physical violence. But everyone tends to be corrupted by power, and women are no exception. Would women continue to be peace-loving if they were in power? The common good can only be based on equitable power-sharing between the sexes, not by denying part of humanity.

■ **You know a lot about Middle Eastern women. How would you define their status?**

A. C.: Women in the Middle East are caught up in a tide that ebbs and flows. They become the beneficiaries of certain social changes, and then, lo and behold, just when they are starting to adjust to these changes, along comes a counter-current that makes society move backwards. Some kinds of freedom appeared in Middle Eastern countries, but they ebbed away as a result of fundamentalist obscurantism. When I was young, I thought the world was moving steadily forward in a straight line. But there are slow-downs and U-turns. I believe that human destiny is subject to cyclical movements of this kind. This does not mean that we should stop looking towards the future, towards progress. My novel *Les marches de sable*, for example, explores the innermost fears, the hopes and the retreats—as well as the ideological and theological struggles—that mark these cycles. Whereas religion should ennoble us, take us out of ourselves and make us more humane, it can build walls between people.

■ **You always try to steer clear of ideologies and conventions.**

A. C.: Yes, as far as possible. I base my life on the word freedom. I don't like being kept on a lead. But this calls for eternal vigilance because life is full of traps of which we are unaware—conventionality, unscrupulous ambition, age, taking oneself too seriously. I try to elude all labels and, of course, classification arising from my origins and culture. Age is a label—one is old or one is young. Other labels are blood, gender and soil. I distrust anything that confines a person to a specific station in life. There is something in us that is so much larger, a sort of flame, an inner freedom that defies definition. This indefinable quality must constantly be reconsidered and

renamed. That is what I try to examine through poetry, the form of expression I cherish the most.

■ **One recurrent theme in your books is coming and going between the city and the desert and vice versa.**

A. C.: That is an unending process that my characters are pushed into by their instinct. Cities for me mean freedom; they are places where people can escape from themselves and their background. City life allows people to blend in with the population, with others, without being chained to them. If I lived in a village, I would feel that I belonged there; I wouldn't experience this self-deliverance that the solitude of city life affords me. City life makes it possible to expand, to be with other people within minutes and to talk to them in the midst of a crowd. You can walk in the city without being disturbed. And poetry is all around you. You just have to stop and observe.

■ **What about the desert?**

A. C.: It's a place where you can make a fresh start after you've been through some kind of ordeal. It's a place for putting things together, for contemplation and simplicity. For dropping your guard. It's a form of training in asceticism and endurance, and a kind of filter. My characters go into the desert to lick their moral wounds. Anastasia, for example, the heroine of *Les marches de sable*, thinks only of emerging from this ordeal in the desert, the crossing of which has purified and strengthened her. But the teaching of the desert is sterile if it is not taken back to the city. After the desert, one has to return to the human world. It is also important to listen to the desert in oneself. It helps to take the sting out of death, to greet it every day as an inevitable companion, so that we can exorcise it and welcome it when the time comes. It's impossible to see life clearly unless one has thought about death at an early age. Death is a certainty—our only certainty—and a scale of values. What comes after, I don't know.

■ **Is your work a quest for continuity?**

A. C.: My work is a step forward in this world, not in the hereafter. It is this side of our existence that concerns me. We keep on asking ourselves the same questions—where have we come from? where are we going?—and no philosopher, scientist or poet has ever answered them satisfactorily. I am amazed every day that I exist as a physical being through this combination of molecules that I am made of. I'm not talking about beauty, make-up or appearance. I wonder how this factory of being with all its complicated mechanisms has managed to take shape. This extraordinary mystery is enough for me. That is why I don't try to pierce the mysteries of the after-life, of the beyond.

Through writing
we bring together our body
and our mind

■ **Is your whole life built around writing?**

A. C.: For me writing and life are inseparable. Writing enriches life. But I'm not a metronome; I can get by for a while without writing. The gestation of a book, for example, calls for a lot of thought and imagination. Something builds up inside me, and ink then traces on paper the course of its development. But the desire to write never leaves me. It is always there, coiled up inside me, and if after a while no writing appears, I start to feel rather uncomfortable, because my life is no longer harmonious. For me, writing is like the act of love, which amplifies, sublimates life and gives it a luminous tension. It puts me in step with this inner vibration, this desire that I feel deep within me. Without it, purely material life is incomplete.

■ **Isn't it self-centred, this act of love you describe as part of writing?**

A. C.: Writing, when compared to the work of a Mother Teresa or a great doctor, to the suffering they alleviate and the difficulties they face, can sometimes seem lightweight and facile, almost like fun. But as the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard wrote, we are "real and unreal", and if we do not combine the real and the unreal, we are traumatized because we are incomplete. Through writing we bring together our body and our mind. Poetry is an act of love, and love gives you inspiration. This is not just love between a man and a woman, but universal love. When I go out into the street, when I mingle with the crowds, I love others. I observe them. I immerse myself in them. The crowd is the clay from which I mould my poems and novels. All these fleeting moments with others nourish life, the force without which we would sink into the void that lies in wait for us. ▶

■ **You have restored a sense of poetry to the novel.**

A. C.: Poetry is asking questions at the deepest level, an attempt to get to the bottom of things. The act of writing is a moment of purification, deployment and self-condensation during which the writer is balanced on a thin wire strung between alpha and omega. It is a moment to ask questions about the purpose and the essence of things. I feel very close to the Japanese poets who write *haiku*, those formal seventeen-syllable poems where the radiance of the essential flows through the ink. I like to write briefly and succinctly. A poem of a few lines often results from a long chain of questioning and reflection that may last several days.

■ **What form does all this take in your daily work?**

A. C.: All my novels have a poetic texture. The raw material is a block of rough, shapeless clay that I work on until I've found the formula. The first draft is always a sketch which is virtually illegible, except to me. Then the characters emerge from the rough matter, and their destiny takes shape. I don't start methodically, with a prearranged plan. At first I let things flow along and take their course. Then I go back to what I've written and look very closely at the words that will have to be cut, tightened or straightened out. I look at the text much more critically at this stage. I search for the right word. Craftsmanship starts after visualization of the idea: I work on the rhythm, the music. It's a process of question-and-answer that goes on day after day. ■

The Seine-Saint-Denis Young People's Book Fair (France)

As in previous years, the *Unesco Courier* will have a stand at the annual Seine-Saint-Denis Young People's Book Fair held in the Paris suburb of Montreuil (France) where it will be meeting some of its regular readers and other young people wishing to find out more about Unesco's goals and activities. Literary works and a wide range of documentary material, magazines, periodicals and multimedia will be presented at the Fair, one of the largest of its kind in France.

The special theme chosen for this year's Fair is "Memory: from the elephant to the chip". The event will be introduced by an international symposium on "Memory and Oblivion" to which historians, researchers, writers and artists will contribute.

The Fair will be held from
3 to 8 December 1997
Symposium: 1 and 2 December 1997

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